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**How America's Benzo
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FROM THE EDITOR

OF all the things I've been called in my life, "calm" isn't one of them. I'm a high-strung, no-holds-barred spaz who is one road-rage honk away from a heart attack. But that's just who I am. Thankfully, I married a super calm man. Opposites attract, after all.

But this got me thinking: Has our entire *nation* become too high-strung? Have we completely forgotten the ancient art of chilling the fuck out? It seems like everyone and their cat is on antianxiety medication these days, yet we live in the most prosperous and luxurious time, with accessibility to *everything*. We are so spoiled; our kids are arguably even more spoiled. So why do they all have ADHD and require Xanax to sleep at night?

Speaking of Xanax, this issue boasts an incredible feature by Miles Raymer about the rise of pill culture in America. The mainstream media has made us 110 percent aware of the opioid epidemic, but how have benzodiazepines slipped into our medicine cabinets without much notice? These potent, sedating drugs (such as Ativan, Valium, and Xanax) are prescribed to a little over five percent of Americans. According to NPR, the number of American adults with a benzo prescription rose 67 percent, to 13.5 million per year in 2013 from 8.1 million in 1999. And although three-quarters of benzo-related fatalities are caused in combination with opioids, a little too much alcohol could have the same deadly results. The point is, we are becoming an overmedicated nation ignoring the root of the problem.

Calming down is essential to life. Whether you achieve this through meditation, a long run, a beer, or an evening of hanging out with your kids, we all have to find our own healthy way of getting out of the red. Don't worry, this isn't a Debbie Downer issue (pun intended). I'm sure you'll find plenty of humor in these pages. Furthermore, our newest Penthouse Pet, Ella Silver, is guaranteed to send you to a very happy place.

Mish Barber-Way
Executive Editor

whatthefuck@penthouse.com

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I WANNA BE ADORED

November Pet of the Month

ELLA SILVER





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PENTHOUSE®

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October
Pet of the Month
Ivy Wolfe

MAIL DOMINANCE

I started to subscribe to *Penthouse* because after 40 years of *Playboy*, I got fed up with the liberal political bias. Thank you for keeping left vs. right out of your publication. I read for the enjoyment and satisfaction of sexually active women who enjoy their sexuality.

—Brad L., via email

[Ed: You may hate the December issue then.... TRIGGER WARNING! Though I hope to give you hot women and a lack of bias until I'm done here.]

Sitting here in my jail cell, I could not believe that you put Matt Pike in the October issue. He is a GOD and his music has gotten me through some brutal times in my life. Thank you for that excellent interview.

—Harlow C., via snail mail

[Ed: I will be sharing this with Matt Pike as soon as possible. I'm glad they let you have *Penthouse* in the big house. Most of the time, that shit gets sent back.]

Thank you for crowning Ivy Wolfe your October Pet of the Month. Those photos of her on the car are now plastered all over my garage. All the boys in the shop are in love. More Ivy!

—Jim L., via email

[Ed: Weren't those amazing? We shot that set out in the desert at the same location as Britney Spears's music video "Work Bitch." But you don't care about that. You aren't a girl or a gay man.]

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

DOMESTIC BLISS

MY wife and I have been married for 11 years, and until a few months ago, she never once let me see her masturbate. She didn't try to deny that she did it, but she'd spent a decade resolutely refusing to let me catch even a glimpse of her pleasuring herself. And the fact that she wouldn't let me just made me obsessed with the idea. Sometimes when I touched myself, all I would think about were the things she could possibly be doing when doing the same thing as me.

The questions left unanswered drove me wild: Did she just play with her clit or did she finger her sexy pussy, too, covering her fingers in her slick arousal? Did she use toys? Did she ever stick anything in her ass? Did she moan aloud as she came or stay silent? I wanted to know desperately, but I'd been married long enough to know better than to push her.

On the evening it all changed, it seemed like my day was going horribly wrong. I'd been late, work had been terrible, and I dropped my phone in the toilet. I always let my wife know I was on my way home, but that day I couldn't, so I just started driving, knowing she would give me a hard time for breaking yet another phone.

I pulled into the garage and walked through the door into the kitchen to the sight I'd been deprived of for so long: my wife, leaning against the counter, legs spread as she fingered herself furiously. She looked up at me, shocked, but as I set down my bag and approached, it seemed like she was far enough gone that she just gave in to the situation.

I walked toward her slowly, almost afraid to move too quickly and break the spell it felt like we were both under. It gave me a moment to take in the scene.

I glanced around the kitchen and realized she'd actually been in the

middle of baking something when she must have gotten so horny she had to stop right there and get herself off. What could possibly have turned her on that much, and that quickly?

I quickly looked her over. Her pink panties were around her knees, her flowery sundress bunched up around her hips. Her red hair was tied up in a messy bun, and she had flour smeared across her forehead. Her pale thighs were spread open and I could see her neatly trimmed pussy.

WATCHING MY WIFE FUCK HERSELF WITH A KITCHEN IMPLEMENT WAS TOO MUCH. I CAME ALMOST IMMEDIATELY, TRYING NOT TO MAKE ANY NOISE.

Every instinct in me screamed to go fuck her, but this was my one chance to see her in full masturbatory action. I wondered if I simply pulled up a chair she'd let me watch. I was too scared to even move a stool in case it gave her time to change her mind, so I just sat down on the kitchen floor and leaned back against the cabinets, which gave me the hottest view of her pussy.

She knew what I wanted. I had been begging to see this for years. I thought she might walk away, but instead she propped one heel up on the counter, exposing her pussy even more. I was close enough to see how wet she was.

My wife started to touch her clit with her right hand, rubbing back and forth with her index and middle fingers. I thought I was going to come in my pants.

She kept on doing this, closing her eyes as though she was trying to pretend I wasn't there—which was fine with me since it let me sneak my zipper down and pull my dick out without distracting her.

I'd barely made it three strokes when

she picked up the rolling pin next to her and began to slide the tapered handle into her cunt. Even though she was clearly into it, I questioned whether she would have done something like this on her own. Maybe she didn't mind my being there after all.

Watching my beautiful wife fuck herself with a kitchen implement was too much. I came almost immediately, trying my best not to make any noise, but she looked like she was too engrossed in her own pleasure to care what I was doing.

I crawled a little closer, kneeling to get a better view of her sliding the handle in and out, pressing it deeper and harder into herself as her fingers on her clit took up a stuttering rhythm.

When she finally came, she held the handle deep inside her and stopped stroking her clit, but left her fingers against it. She had been fairly quiet, but now she couldn't seem to help letting out a single guttural moan that I will be fantasizing about until the day I die.

I pulled her off the counter and laid her down on the floor, dropping my pants and rolling her under me. I was hard again, so I thrust into her with one deep stroke, marveling at how wet she was. We fucked right there until we both came again, making an even bigger mess.

My terrible day turned out to be pretty great, and when my wife started to pretend to be mad at me for surprising her, I took her upstairs and licked her pussy until she forgave me.

She didn't immediately become okay with letting me watch her masturbate after that, but the door was cracked open, and she let me experiment with it until she was finally comfortable.

And boy, is she comfortable now!

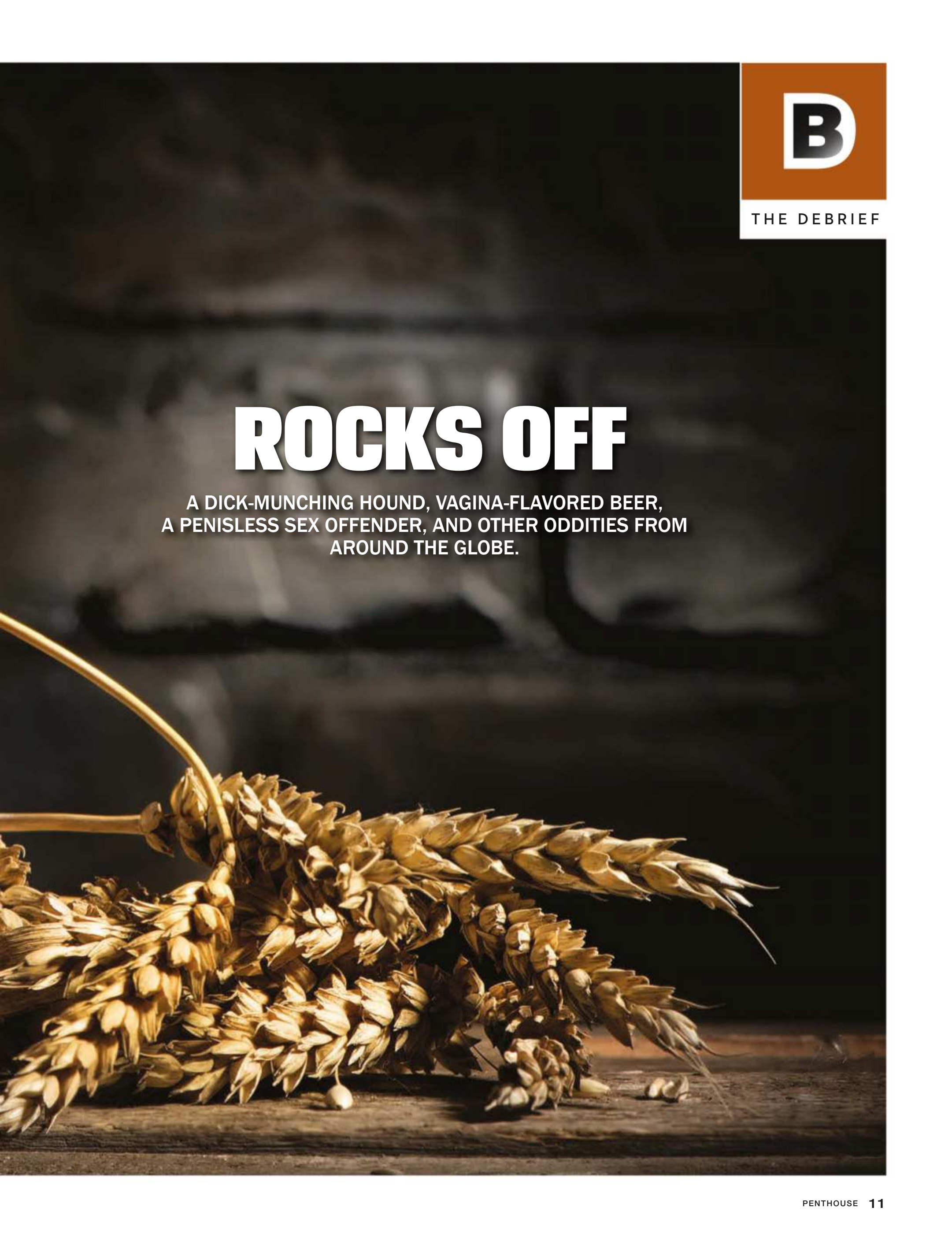
—Pete S., Atlanta, Georgia

CONTINUED ON PAGE 126

Seeing is believing. When you've had the encounter you've been hoping for, let us know about it! Send your letters to: *Penthouse* magazine, 8944 Mason Avenue, Chatsworth, CA 91311, or email us at letters@penthouse.com.





**B**

THE DEBRIEF

ROCKS OFF

A DICK-MUNCHING HOUND, VAGINA-FLAVORED BEER,
A PENISLESS SEX OFFENDER, AND OTHER ODDITIES FROM
AROUND THE GLOBE.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / BY ASILYSUN

BEHOLD THE PEEEGASM

Is there anything less sexy than urine and feces?

Would you be even more disgusted to learn that some people can achieve orgasm while peeing or pooping? Apologies for triggering your gag reflex, but it seems to be true.

Although science has yet to confirm it, multiple women online have stated that when they hold their urine for longer than usual, they can experience full-body orgasms when they finally let loose and start spraying.

On a Reddit thread, one woman described her experience:

At first I had no idea what the fuck they were, but I talked to a handful of close friends who had heard of or experienced [something] similar.... I don't try for them often, they mostly come by accident, but a beautiful accident at that. It normally helps if

I've been a little horny to begin with and holding it for long periods of time.

Another woman chimed in:

Every time I have to pee super bad and I am with a friend or my SO, I always say, "Sorry, be right back. I gotta go bust a nut."

Even more filthy and inscrutable is the "poopgasm," aka "poophoria," which happens during defecation when a stool is large enough to distend the rectum, hitting the vagus nerve and sending signals to the brain that register as an orgasm.

Again, medical science has not verified whether peegasms and poopgasms are real. Perhaps some demented philanthropist will foot the bill to fund the research.

And now it's time for a shower.

SPERM-SWAPPIN' WOMAN

ALTHOUGH the terms “cuckold” and “cuck” get tossed around with stupid abandon in political forums these days, evolutionary biology says that a “cuckold” is a male who unwittingly helps raise children who aren't his own. The term is derived from the cuckoo bird, who has an extremely rude habit of laying its eggs in other birds' nests.

Say hello to Maxim Anokhin, Russian cuckold.

Maxim recently sued a Russian clinic after it was revealed that his wife, a hot blonde Muscovite named Yana, swapped out his sperm for that of her lover during long-term IVF treatments. The clinic was found guilty because although Yana had told them she was in love with another man and wanted him to be the child's father, they allowed Maxim to pay for her treatments.

He *paid* for it? That's peak cuck right there.

Several heartbreaking photos show Maxim, who is somewhat nerdy and thus probably an unsuitable sexual playmate for his supercharged wife, playing with and cuddling the infant son who, as fate would have it, was the fruit of another man's loins.

As their marriage fell apart, Yana—who, although hot, seems like a wee bit of a bitch—revealed that the boy Maxim was feeding and holding and loving was not his.

According to a Russian TV news show called *Vesti*:

“It was found out during the investigation in court that Maxim's wife, Yana, was the one who initiated the process of replacing her husband's biological material.... Allegedly, she wanted to give birth to a child by a man with whom she was in love, and her husband was the one who paid the costs.”

“Biological material”? Way to kill our sex drive, Russkis.

“I trusted my wife,” said Maxim the Cuckold. “I believed her and trusted her, 100 percent. It means that when I was told about it, I was shocked. I was distressed, and I could hardly believe it. I wanted to make this matter public, so there are no more cheated men like me...in the future.”

Maxim claims that he has a new son with a new female partner, and this time around he's certain the child is his. Then again, that's exactly what you'd expect a bona fide cuck to say.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / BY LUKYANOVA NATALIA FRENTA

DOG EATS DONG



WE were all taught in kindergarten that you should never make moves on a sleeping married woman, or a dog might wind up eating your cock. It's simple and helpful advice, but apparently at least one man in Thailand was absent from class that day.

Names in Thailand are so complicated that we suspect even they can't pronounce them, but here goes: A guy named Suwit Thipjantha had apparently been tippling some alcohol and was in an advanced state of inebriation when he allegedly made a pass at the slumbering wife of his boss, Permsak Petprasert, who had allowed Thipjantha to board at his house.

There are no available details about exactly what this “pass” entailed, so it's best to speculate: Maybe he said, “You have quite attractive hands, ma'am.” There's a remote possibility that he licked his lips while patting his head and rubbing his tummy. Perchance he stated, “The sunlight

shines down upon you and causes your breasts to cast long, torpedo-like shadows onto the floor.” It's possible he did that thing where he wiggled his tongue in between two of his fingers to simulate cunnilingus. Or maybe he grabbed his crotch and started making loud grunting sounds. We may never know.

What is alleged, however, is that after this drunken pass was made and Petprasert arrived home to his upset wife, he seized a fruit knife and sliced off his underling's manhood. He then tossed the severed pee-pee into some nearby bushes. After a thorough search for the dismembered member, police concluded that a dog had eaten it.

Who exactly should feel guilty here? The man who made a drunken pass? The man who sliced the other man's penis off and discarded it like a half-eaten hot dog? Or the dog, who feasted upon another man's tragedy?

Food for thought. Or at least that's what the dog said.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / BY KAZBEK CHERMIT



POST-NOOKIE BLUES

AS nearly every woman knows, men do one of two things after sex: 1) They fall asleep; or 2) They flee as if leaving a murder scene.

A new study from Australia, however, finds that four out of ten men endure “inexplicable feelings of tearfulness, sadness, or irritability” after rutting with their partner.

The condition, known as postcoital dysphoria (PCD), was largely thought to only affect women, but researchers from the Queensland University of Technology studied 1,208 men from multiple countries and concluded that many men get a case of “the sads” after blowing their loads.

The survey involved men responding in the affirmative or negative to characterizations of their postcoital mood. Among the statements were these: “I don’t want to be touched and want to be left alone,” and, “I feel unsatisfied, annoyed, and very fidgety. All I really want is to leave and distract myself from everything I participated in.”

According to the study’s coauthor, Joel Maczkowiack:

“Forty-one percent of the participants reported experiencing PCD in their lifetime with 20 percent reporting they had experienced it in the previous four weeks.”

Roughly four percent of men said they experience PCD regularly. According to the study’s other coauthor, Robert Schweitzer:

“The first three phases of the human sexual response cycle—excitement, plateau, and orgasm—have been the focus of the majority of research to date. Yet previous studies on the PCD experience of females showed that a similar proportion of females had experienced PCD on a regular basis. As with the men in this new study, it is not well understood. We would speculate that the reasons are multifactorial, including both biological and psychological factors.”

In other words, despite all the hype you hear, men aren’t unfeeling, bulldozing sex hogs—in fact, they may be every bit as sensitive as women.

Either that, or the sex they’re having is so bad that they fall into a deep depression afterward.

TINKER TAILOR TAMPON SPY

WHEN a woman suspects that an errant tampon has migrated so far up her vaginal canal that she can no longer find it, she tends to panic. She paces. She sweats. She swears. She calls her friends. And, these days, she might even post about it on social media.

Thus was the sad and humiliating fate of one Ushaanaa Laela Shah, a residential home-care worker on England’s Isle of Wight, who was suddenly stricken with the all-consuming terror that accompanies the realization that a tampon has gone rogue.

As the crisis was unspooling, Shah posted on Facebook that she’d begged her friend Lydia to come and serve as the Jaws of Life to pluck the pesky plug from ’tween her trembling legs:

“I couldn’t find the end of the string and at first I started laughing until I started freaking out.... I got into the bath hoping that might help and contemplated whether this could be the end. I text[ed] my friend and she even

came over to try and help me but when my mum came home, she suggested I [go] to [the E.R.]. I even felt like I had a tummy ache.”

Shah let the world know, even though nobody had asked, that Lydia “walked in on me lying in the bath, hands crossed over my chest, listening to a playlist of ‘songs to die to.’” She added that Lydia, who is clearly a very good friend, put plastic bags on her hands and fished inside Shah’s vag, searching for the tampon like a desperate sailor rooting around in a slop bucket on a clam quest.

When Lydia’s spelunking yielded no feminine hygiene product, Shah was rushed to a local hospital and continued to fret and sweat and twist and turn for three hours before a doctor examined her and declared that there was no tampon inside her.

So what happened to it? There are only two possibilities: 1) She had never put one in when she awoke that morning; or 2) the Russians are involved.





MIDAIR MELEE

IN simpler and more wholesome times, a publicly drunken woman could do cartwheels down an airplane aisle, flash her boobs, and give lap dances to total strangers without a sudden eruption of violence.

But alas, due to Donald Trump and other factors—correction, it's totally Trump's fault—we now live in dark and dangerous times.

On a recent flight between England and the notorious party island of Ibiza, a woman sitting toward the back of the plane was drinking with a group of men. Then she sashayed up toward the front, where there were more men willing to ply her with drinks.

Elated, euphoric, and empowered—“shitfaced,” in other words—she began acting as if the airplane cabin was a strip club.

According to one passenger:

“She was up lap-dancing on them and she got her boobs out, and she was a mess the whole time.... She was also doing cartwheels down the aisle of the plane while we were flying along.”

In addition, witnesses reported the unnamed woman playfully tapped people on the backs of their heads during her aisle prancing, with one blonde woman slapping her hand away.

It was around this point that the communal lust erupted into a full-on brawl, with shoving and cursing and fists flying as a cabin full of sexually aroused males began harming one another in a quest to gain exclusive access to this woman's reproductive organs. The plane was on the verge of exploding into unhinged carnality when the flight crew finally regained control, quelling the violence and informing everyone that authorities had been notified.

After landing in Ibiza, several passengers were arrested for their participation in the mile-high stripper rumble.

This only goes to prove what Mark Twain said about how women should never give lap dances to strangers on airplanes. Wait, Twain died before there were airplanes. Maybe it was Jerry Seinfeld? Either way, it's a valuable lesson.



BEAVER BREWING CO.

DO ya like beer? Do ya like vaginas? Then you should LOVE vagina beer!

A Polish brewery called The Order of Yoni—"yoni" is a Sanskrit word for vagina—has launched a beer made partially from the "vaginal lactic acid of hot underwear models."

According to the brewery's website:

"Imagine the woman of your dreams, your object of desire. Her charm, her sensuality, her passion. Try how she tastes, feel her smell, hear her voice. Now imagine her giving you a passionate massage and gently whispering anything you'd like to hear. Now free your fantasies and imagine all of that can be [en]closed in a bottle of beer."

Wojtek Mann, The Order of Yoni's founder, says the beer was invented after a gynecologist took vaginal smears from two

models and isolated their lactic acid bacteria.

"The secret of the beer lies in her vagina," the website continues. "Using hi-tech microbiological techniques, we isolate, examine, and prepare lactic acid bacteria from the vagina of a unique woman."

Addressing concerns that the vagina beer might not only contain vaginal lactic acid but also maybe, oh, herpes, chlamydia, or even a soupçon of HIV, the company assures customers that every "hot model" whose vaginal lactic acid goes into their beer is screened for STDs and that the process is designed to isolate the lactic acid from other possibly "unsavory elements."

In many social settings, a man can only get a girl to talk to him if he pays for her drink. But with vaginal beer, you get the girl IN the drink.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / BY SERGEI MISHCHENKO

THE TATTED EUNUCH



ADAM Curlykale was diagnosed with colon cancer at age 22. Using mental toughness and splashes of chemotherapy, he beat the disease and then set about to reclaim his body by smothering it in tattoos.

A decade into this quest, 90 percent of Curlykale's body is completely coated in black ink—including his face and, sure, why not, his eyeballs.

At the moment, the only parts of his body that aren't tatted are his armpits, buttocks, palms, and the soles of his feet. He looks like a photographic negative of a Caucasian man.

There was only one problem—well, there appear to be several problems at work here, but according to Curlykale, his troublesome penis, testicles, and nipples interfered with the aesthetics of his look. So this native of Kaliningrad, Russia, did what any sane person would do: He flew to Mexico to have the offending items

removed from his body.

In doing so, Curlykale became what is known in fringe body-modification communities as a "nullo"—someone who has their genitals removed as a fashion statement.

"People very often refuse me the right to live, let alone offer me real employment," Curlykale says, as if there was something hateful about doing a double-take at a neutered man who appears to have dipped himself in chocolate.

Despite the misgivings of normal society, Curlykale vows to soldier on. He declares that not only does he plan to have his armpits and buttocks inked, he is also angling to have his palms and the soles of his feet tattooed with mandalas.

If he isn't finally happy after all that, we suspect that being able to see all his tattoos may not be his biggest problem.

PHOTO FROM PENTHOUSE MAGAZINE ARCHIVES



TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN LITTLE SOLDIER

PITY the poor Scotsman, Carlos Delacruz, for he was born with penile agenesis, a condition that strikes only one in every five or six million men. Quite simply, Delacruz was born without a penis. Perhaps it was a biological anomaly, perhaps it was a cruel prank played by a sadistic deity; we'll never know.

Delacruz would take female lovers but only allow them to touch him "over his clothing," with the lights out. To compensate for the fact that he effectively had a belly button below his regular belly button, he'd slip what prosecutors are calling an "unknown object" into their vaginas in place of the penis that never was.

It was apparently a rather large object, because both women who have brought criminal charges against him for sexual assault by deception claim the penile impostor caused them "extreme pain."

According to the aptly named prosecutor, Kirsten Cockburn:

"The accused was in a relationship with one of the women between May 2013 and January 2016 and they first had sex in May 2013. She believed she was being penetrated by his penis. The accused does not have a penis. She knew he was self-conscious about his body and always wore a T-shirt.... During their relationship the woman continued to believe he had a penis."

However, after being arrested and examined by police, it was determined that, nope, Delacruz did not have a johnson. He had lived his life entirely willie-free. At a court appearance, he admitted to his abject penislessness, and also that he had indeed used a mystery object to penetrate the women.

Delacruz has yet to be sentenced, but has been formally placed on a list of sex offenders.

At press time, the unknown object remains at large.

TOOTHPASTE LIES

REGARDING mammary size, the maxim "anything bigger than a mouthful" is a good rule, but maybe whatever sage wrote that should have specified what sort of mouth they meant. Human? Elephant? Blue whale? How big is too big?

In their never-ending quest to please men who probably don't even deserve to be pleased in the first place, American women spent over a billion dollars on breast-augmentation surgeries in 2016. Yep, each of them ponied up a ten-figure sum to go under the knife and have big floppy bags plunged into their chest cavity just to please some asshole dude who likely wasn't breastfed properly.

So it's understandable that women would seek more natural, homeopathic methods to enhance their flesh melons.

A YouTuber named Susana Home Remedies claims that putting toothpaste on your nipples and rubbing Vaseline on the rest of your breasts will cause a woman's teats to swell like giant mushrooms under the springtime sun.

Not so, says Dr. Christopher Inglefield, medical director of the London Bridge Plastic Surgery & Aesthetic Clinic:

"This bizarre advice simply preys on the many women who are unhappy with the size of their breasts and who might resort to bizarre 'miracle fixes' to find a solution to their problem. Sadly, like a lot of guidance on the internet, the Vaseline and toothpaste method of breast augmentation is fake news and pure online quackery. Your breasts may end up smelling minty fresh, but it's highly unlikely there will be any growth."

According to a beauty blogger named MakeUpMesha, she tried smearing toothpaste on her boobs for 30 days with no perceptible size increase. "It did not work," the blogger wrote. "I tried it every night, like an idiot, had my boyfriend looking at me like, *What is she doing?*"

Toothpaste is for teeth, and therein lies the problem. If you want bigger boobs, everyone knows you need to get a tube of boobpaste. We wish we didn't have to explain this.



BURT REYNOLDS, SUPER STUD

A LOOK BACK AT THE ACTOR'S 1972 PENTHOUSE INTERVIEW.

BY SARAH WALKER

THE death of Burt Reynolds on September 6 marked the end of an era, not only in American film but American masculinity. Since then, countless tributes have commemorated the actor's legacy, but we decided to go back—way back—to the interview Reynolds did for this magazine in 1972, conducted by radio personality Fred Robbins, a close friend of the actor. At the time, Reynolds was appearing in the play *The Rainmaker*, and *Deliverance* had just hit theaters (though here there's hardly mention of the film, which became a huge hit, and is still considered one of the best action movies of all time). Reynolds had also been guest hosting *The Tonight Show* for Johnny Carson, and, most notably, *Cosmopolitan* just published the now infamous photo of the actor lying naked on a bear skin rug.

Penthouse's nine-page exposé painted a portrait of Reynolds, then 36, that people may no longer recognize—candid, virile, and full of confidence and excitement for a career that was about to explode. Here are our favorite naughty bits.

If the enthusiasm of the audience during your current tour of *The Rainmaker* is anything to go by, you seem to have experienced a new

surge of popularity following your nude centerfold in *Cosmopolitan*.

Helen Gurley Brown is certainly the best business woman in the world. She printed 400,000 extra copies. Hell, if she'd known what was going to happen, she'd have printed two million extra copies. The reason it sold is that women have a lot better sense of humor than men give them credit for, and they're tired of coming home and looking at *Penthouse* and *Playboy* pictures with all that cleavage and having the husband say, "Why the hell don't you look like that, Martha?"—after they've had eight babies, you know. So it was a chance to take something and stick it in the husbands' ears. Jesus, to be a part of that was a terrific fun thing. But it could have been a disaster. I could be playing to empty theaters right now.

A lot of women were disappointed that they didn't see the whole thing.

Yeah. I got a lot of that, too. But I judged it by the way I judge photographs of women—to me, the sexiest thing is something that leaves a little to the imagination. Plus the fact that I wanted to be funny. And I've never found anything funny about a man's cock.

Were you asked in the beginning to do it completely nude?

We tried both ways. They took a million pictures, and I'm sure, right now, in the underground in New York, there's a lot of pictures circulating of me with everything hanging out. It was a cold day. I'm sorry they got those.

One female reaction was that the picture wasn't exciting because it's a soft picture—no athletic motion, with muscles stretched taut.

You and I both know that what turns you on may not turn me on, etc. I'm sure that's just as true with women. A lot of women are turned on by fat chubby little guys. A lot of women are turned on by jocks. Very few are turned on by the Charles Atlas muscle-bound egg-shaped guy—mostly because most of them are so busy working on their bods, they never have time to work on their personalities. I think it's sexier if it's a face you recognize because then you fantasize all kinds of things. Open a magazine, and there's Ursula Andress or Raquel Welch or somebody in her underwear—you think, "Gee, that's terrific. Never saw her in her underwear before." And then you can conjure up all kinds of things. Probably the most stimulating thing to guys is to see somebody who doesn't do that kind of thing ordinarily, I would think. If I see Raquel, I'm really not that turned-on, but if I open up a magazine and see Carol Burnett—that would turn me on. If a woman thinks she's sexy, she is.

Were you surprised by the wild letters you got?

I didn't expect to get thousands.... I also got thousands saying it was fun and terrific, and "I'm glad you did it and my whole family loves you, and my grandmother loves you and my husband loves you"—you know I even got one from a chick who's on a roller derby team and has it in her locker. The freaks' letters were what you would imagine some guy with a raincoat beating off would write to some chick—downright sex letters: "I want to fuck your brains out," etc. Where do you go from there?.... A lot of them sent Polaroids of themselves in the nude. One girl from Canada sent me pubic hair wrapped in wax paper.

Wasn't there one who papered her wall with the centerfold?

Yeah, she called up from Chicago and asked for, I guess, 500 magazines. It ended up costing her \$700. She papered her entire bedroom with them.... I had a funny experience a few years ago with two girls named Franny and Zoey, still very good friends of mine, whom I ended up in the

sack with after a telethon.... I mentioned this sort of casually on the *Tonight Show* and I had a lot of letters signed "Franny and Zoey," with photographs, too.

How many letters contained pubic hair?

Just the one. If it was ever mentioned on the air, I'm sure there'd be lots of bald broads.

You've been called the No. 1 sex symbol—Super Stud. Have you tried to analyze why you appeal to women?

First of all, I don't think it's true that I'm Super Stud. But I thank you. If I had to analyze why I think [women] are attracted to me, I would have to say it's because most of them say to me, "I really don't want to go to bed with that *Cosmopolitan* thing, I want to go to bed with you. You look sexy with your clothes on. I love your crazy personality." I think it's a related kind of attitude that women are attracted to.

The *Playboy* image of what a man should be I send up constantly. I mean, having a bunny decal on his glass says to me he ain't gonna make out at all. If you have to go around saying "I am a stud," then you ain't. I think women are attracted to a guy who doesn't wear big belt buckles and talk with a deep voice and smoke Marlboros and say, "I'm tough." They want a guy who is going to treat them like a lady, and is going to respect them, and who likes women.

If it wasn't you right now, which other guy would you say would fill the [sex symbol] image?

There are a lot of guys who would qualify, but who happen to be married, which makes it very difficult for them to go on a show and say the things that I say. Not that being married can stop you from being a sex symbol, because Paul Newman is married and he certainly is a sex symbol. Clint Eastwood, I think, probably could be because he has a tremendous sense of humor, as very few people know, mostly because Clint is a kind of recluse and prefers it that way. He's a great-looking guy, a very physical guy—but he also happens to be very happily married and has just had a second baby.

Does it ever worry you that you might meet a chick who has seen the *Cosmo* thing and has fantasized all kinds of expectations that you're now expected to live up to?

I've never worried about something like that. It's probably one of the pluses for going out with starlets. They're hoping for a three-star rating, so they [screw] your

brains out. Knowing Hollywood, the way it is—everybody thinks everybody knows what everybody else is doing, so God knows you don't want to be called a bad lay. If some chick had fantasized something about me, I think she would be terrific in the sack, just by the mere fact that she had fantasized about it.

How do you react toward the nudism trend in general?

I am not turned-on, quite honestly, by the nude look. To me, there is still nothing more sexy than a great-looking broad in underwear. Also, I like to see a chick fully dressed but in one of those blouses where you can just see the nipples. That's very sexy, but not if she's got size 48s and the nipple is right around her bellybutton....

As far as society is concerned—society is going to go as far as we let it go. You can get some very nice, polite people in a room...and all of a sudden these people turn into animals. I don't want to be involved in a situation where every night you go to somebody's house and jump everybody's bones. That's not my idea of a lot of fun. I enjoy the hunt.

Are we in the U.S. catching up with other countries in permissiveness?

No, we're not anywhere near Denmark in terms of pornography—nor Amsterdam, which is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, but has a great red-light district. If we had a great red-light district in New York it would make it possible to walk down Sixth Avenue without getting tripped every other store. I think we've got to be able to have pornography in one specified section of town. A lot of freaks run over there and get those magazines, run home and jack off, and then they don't attack anybody. It seems to me that that would release a little pressure.

There has been pornography around ever since I can remember—playing cards and those funny little Dick Tracy magazines. The problem is that it's done in such bad taste. I think you can just about do anything, if you do it with taste. If you walk down a street with your kid and there's some broad holding her tits in a guy's mouth, that's not too cool. Your kid's nine years old and he says: "What is she feeding him, Daddy?" Why not have a store where it just says what it is on the outside and that's all, and all the goods are hidden inside?

Similar to the shops in Hamburg, Germany—which are like markets, and you can go in and buy whatever you want with no sweat?

And the women don't give you that funny look when you buy them, either. "What would you like, sir? 19-inch vibrator? Wonderful."

What's the sexiest thing you've ever done?

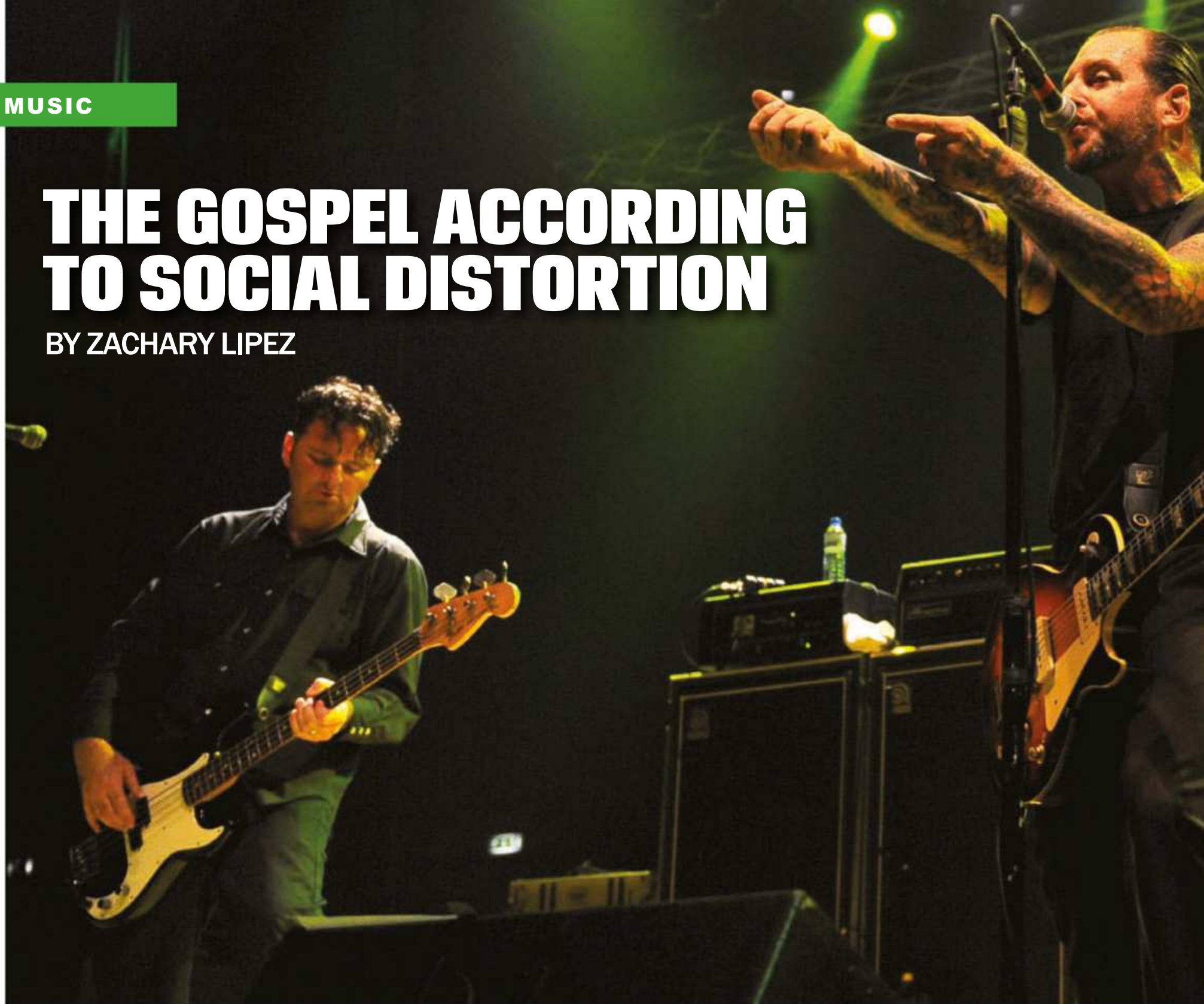
Probably the sexiest moment I've ever had was when I met a lady I've never seen since. I was on a ship, on a cruise, to Ensenada—and no one was paying any attention to her, probably because she had the biggest breasts I've ever seen in my life. They were so big that they intimidated everyone. Also, she had a belligerent attitude to everyone. She was about six feet tall—incredible-looking broad.... She was reading something like Milton's *Paradise Lost*, sitting on this sun deck, and I happened to look over at her, and she dropped her leg, and she had no underwear on. She was reading this very heady book but looking over the top of the book at me.... So I walked over and sat down and said: "Any woman that looks like you and has a body like yours has heard every line that's ever been said, so I'm just going to say it straight out.... I want to fuck your brains out." She said: "What took you so long?" And she closed the book and we left and we never came out of that room for 48 hours. I never saw her again but that is one of the things in my life that I'll remember always. She was a teacher at a college, but she wouldn't tell me which one. In the room she said: "Look, I don't want to know your name. I don't want you to know mine. This is strictly physical." And of course, it ended up not being, because we talked about so many things, got into so many areas. I've often wondered if she ever sees me on television.

You're a *Penthouse* subscriber, aren't you? What do you like about it?

It's much more honest than *Playboy*. It is a magazine totally devoted to studs, and it doesn't try to be anything else. It has a fun kind of crazy, English sense of humor about it—which I think is the best sense of humor in the world. They were the first ones to have pubic hair, and it was so ridiculous not to before. I personally don't think it's as sexy as seeing pubic hair behind a pair of pants, but that is my own fetish. I just found the magazine to be...pardon the pun, beautifully laid out. *Penthouse* girls just look like they think their bodies are so beautiful.... I don't know whether the photographer happens to be a freak like me, or just happens to get the right girls, but that's the right idea. 

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SOCIAL DISTORTION

BY ZACHARY LIPEZ



LIKE Saint Peter on the occasion of Jesus Christ's arrest, I have denied Social Distortion three times.

The first was when I heard rumors of lead singer Mike Ness sending signed photos of himself sucking his own dick to girls he'd slept with, and I, like a worshipper of a golden calf, spread those rumors farther, regardless of their validity, blinded by their garish allure.

The second time I denied Social Distortion was when I went all in on being a Murder City Devils fan, reveling in the small differences as I pretended that a tattoo of the number 13 surrounded by flames was less corny than flaming dice, and that pomade as a tool for dishevelment was superior to using God's cream to shape a beautiful pompadour—as though chaos was somehow better than carpentry. Looking back, I hate myself.

The third denial was, on the surface, the most benign. But if we subscribe to the ecclesiastical notion that indifference to

God, not rebellion, is the worst sin, denial No. 3 was arguably the most insidious: I simply forgot about Social Distortion. Life got in the way, and I actually went a stretch without once thinking about America's premier purveyors of hard-luck hairdo rock. For that, like Peter upon hearing the rooster crow after the Last Supper, I repent like a motherfucker.

Social Distortion—formed in 1978 in Orange County as a better-than-average punk band made distinctive by Ness's strung-out, bummed-out vocal fry—is an easy band to hate and love in equal measure. An earnest cliché factory that made a personality out of cigarettes, without ever getting that sweet Tom Waits cachet, Social D makes tough-guy music for car nerds (except actual tough guys tend to prefer hardcore or, like, freestyle).

The band mainly appealed to the sort of guys who wanted to date girls who looked like Bettie Page but settled for girls with Bettie Page tattoos, and girls who

wanted to date Ness but would leave with the drummer, any drummer. Most of the Social Distortion fans I grew up with just settled on racism and, eventually, death. I'm not better than any of these people; Social Distortion just made me want to be a badass, and I'm lucky enough to have moved to a town that rewarded posers.

Besides writing songs as catchy as anything by the Ramones, Social Distortion's glory lies in the way it exists entirely outside of time. With their deep attachment to a historical period that never existed, they can't help but be an eternal anachronism. Despite all the gestures to James Dean and Sun Studios, no prior band ever sounded like Social Distortion. They're like time-traveling aliens trying to blend into 1950s society, but in 1994. Their closest counterpart in this devotion to an America that never was is Lana Del Rey. Or the Republican party.

Like the face of God and grilled cheese, Social Distortion never changed once they



found their true voice on *Prison Bound*, a 1988 album of sexy junkie regret. If there was any evolution, it was just to become a more perfect, truer, and streamlined version of what they were before. They wear cowboy shirts over wifebeaters and play three-chord blues and countrified punk rock. That's all they do, and if EDM or rap ever happened, they certainly weren't made awares.

It's a purity of vision that might lead some people, including some of their fans, to believe that Social Distortion is conservative. They are not. While their choice of Rolling Stones covers ("Back Street Girl," "Under My Thumb") probably won't get Ness invited to any campus women's studies groups, the man does love to punch Nazis.

When Ness was recently in the news for roughing up a MAGA-type show attendee (not necessarily a proponent of National Socialism but, for the purposes of this discussion, close enough) who took issue

with the insufficiently racist stage patter, I was delighted. But those whose love of Social Distortion has never wavered poo-pooed the whole kerfuffle by saying, "Mike Ness has *always* punched Nazis."

When your fans can be blasé about your penchant for knocking out cretins, you're doing something right.

Not one to ignore portents, especially when delivered by rockabilly cherubs, I have turned my heart back unto the light of Social Distortion. I started talking about them to my friends (Mike Berdan from pig-fuck-noise-rockers Uniform is a longtime fan, which...surprised me). I played all seven of their albums, in chronological order, in the bar I work at. The place filled up nicely for a Sunday night and even the Europeans tipped, a rare miracle I lay directly at the feet of our grease-stained troubadours. I even played Ness's solo albums, which should suck, but instead rule.

I felt wild and free, a bad enough man with a heart of gold, whose hair was slicked

if not growing back. I didn't feel like I did the first time I heard Social Distortion—thank God—as I now know what I didn't then: that I will, eventually, have sex. But there was a shadow of that electricity of desire and possibility just offscreen, like I was some sort of hero in some sort of movie while that music was playing.

And if the truth is that, like Saint Peter, I'm more a character actor in someone else's noir, well, shit, at least some bad trouble and hard loving was going down for someone's rockin' daddy. I don't know if the cock crowing three times at the end of JC's final rave-up is analogous to last call at a dive bar on MacDougal Street, but it felt like a real cool time to be redeemed all the same. 

Zachary Lipez is a writer and bartender in New York City. He is the author (with collaborators Stacy Wakefield and Nick Zinner) of "131 Different Things," which will be out in November.

MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY

Hollywood actor and producer Matthew McConaughey is the kind of guy you'd want to grab a beer with. He's down-to-earth enough to keep it real, but with that extra special peppering of crazy that will ensure everyone a good time. In recent years, McConaughey earned praise for killer performances in films like *Dallas Buyers Club* (he won an Oscar), *Mud*, and *The Wolf of Wall Street*. Then there was his captivating lead on *True Detective*. Now he might win another Oscar for his role as Rick Wershe Sr. in *White Boy Rick*, a film about a 14-year-old drug dealer and FBI informant in crack-crazed 1980s Detroit, and the kid's hustler dad, played by McConaughey. A riveting story of crime, corruption, and cocaine, it follows this year's acclaimed documentary about Rick Wershe Jr., *White Boy*, coproduced by *Penthouse* contributor Seth Ferranti. In the newly released feature film, McConaughey—you guessed it—steals the show. 

[#whiteboyrickmovie](#)



ADRIANA LIMA

Brazilian-born supermodel and Victoria's Secret runway legend Adriana Lima is the kind of woman we can only describe as intimidatingly gorgeous. The 37-year-old beauty is one of the highest-paid models in the world and has walked the runway for all the top fashion designers. And the world can't get enough of her. Lima has 11.7 million Instagram followers and doubles as brand ambassador for clothing lines like Desigual, Sportmax, and Calzedonia. Whether she's posting stories of herself boxing at the gym or modeling for the latest issue of *Vogue*, Lima continues to blow our minds with her effortless sensuality. ✨

See more of Adriana Lima @adrianalima



NUCLEAR FAMILY

FALLOUT 76

Bethesda Softworks (PS4, Xbox One, PC)

If there's any series that can put a silver lining on the mushroom cloud of a nuclear apocalypse, it's the *Fallout* role-playing games, which mix zany anything-goes gameplay with 1950s atom-bomb hysteria in an open world crawling with mutant nightmares. This sequel is the largest and zaniest yet, offering a new option for postapocalyptic survival: multiplayer cooperative gameplay.

You are a survivor of Vault 76, a subterranean prepper community, tasked with scouring the surface realm for supplies 25 years after the mushroom clouds have cleared. Although lone-wolf types can still trek solo, you'll find the game easier with a little help from your non-mutated friends.

Squad up online with three fellow vault dwellers to undertake missions for the survival of your colony.

While previous entries let you explore irradiated versions of New England and Las Vegas, *Fallout 76* unleashes players in a region that's wild even by today's pre-nuked standards: West Virginia. The state's mountains, towns, and landmarks have been faithfully reproduced in post-nuked form and split into six regions. Each landscape crawls with nuclear horrors: cannibalistic humans, radioactive bears, dragon-size bats, and beasts inspired by backwoods folklore. A new combat system lets you confront foes in real-time as in a typical first-person shooter while

using the tactical elements of the slower-paced past installments. In other words, you can play tactically or just shoot shit.

The game packs a broad payload of guns and ammo, from muzzle-loading pistols to flesh-broiling laser cannons. Hard-core role-playing fans can tweak hundreds of character-development perks. You'll build a unique survivor and assemble settlements that you can manage with an iron fist. Eventually, you and your squad will find nuclear codes that unleash atomic hellfire on enemy settlements, perpetuating the cycle of mutually assured destruction and spawning more powerful mutants in the contaminated hellscape of West Virginia. 

BUILDING CHARACTER: ACTION GAMES THAT DOUBLE AS DEEP ROLE-PLAYING EPICS

> 4 <

HITMAN 2 (WARNER BROS., PS4, XBOX ONE, PC)

Peer through the heightened senses of Agent 47, the genetically-bred assassin, in this sequel that accurately portrays the trials and triumphs of the world's second-oldest profession. You'll need to sniff out betrayals, pack the right tools, and choose the path of least resistance as you track down six high-profile targets around the world while trying to avoid early retirement yourself.



> 3 <

MIDDLE EARTH: SHADOW OF WAR DEFINITIVE EDITION (WARNER BROS., PS4, XBOX ONE, PC)

Set between events depicted in those *Hobbit* movies and Led Zeppelin's "Ramble On," *Shadow of War* gives you free rein to stymie the evil Sauron's APB for the One Ring. Spared foes hold grudges and use your own tactics against you, so don't be afraid to use scorched-Middle Earth tactics. This deluxe edition includes four massive expansions and a trove of bonus loot.



> 2 <

ASSASSIN'S CREED ODYSSEY (UBISOFT, PS4, XBOX ONE, PC)

Assassin's Creed Odyssey transplants its scowling antihero from the recent past to ancient history. You're once again tasked with taking out historical figures as efficiently as possible, except now the character-building aspects of the series are ramped up to match the Hellenistic hyperbole of Greek mythology. Forge relationships and build a myriad of abilities both real and mythical.



> 1 <

UNDERWORLD ASCENDANT (505 GAMES, PC)

The spiritual sequel to *Ultima Underworld*, one of the most celebrated role-playing games of all time, *Ascendant* takes the tropes of ye olde dungeon-crawling adventures and adds the play-it-your-way style of modern sandbox games. Your mission is simple: sojourn to the darkest depths of a dungeon and slay a great evil with any combination of swords, sorcery, and/or sneakiness.





DANCING MANIA VOL. 1

BY MICHAEL HINGSTON

EVERY so often, a new dance craze sweeps the nation. The first one I remember seeing in person was the Macarena, which showed up out of nowhere and conquered my elementary-school dances swiftly and without mercy. My classmates and I were powerless against it. Even if you hated it, you had no choice but to join in. Today, things are basically the same: If you have kids, odds are one of them has done the Dab or the Floss since you started reading this.

But none of our modern moves are anything compared to the original dance mania—a literal compulsion that swept Europe, off and on, throughout the Middle Ages. For reasons nobody has ever been able to fully explain, large groups of people were suddenly taken with the desire to start dancing, and nothing could compel them to stop. People danced for so long their feet bled. Their ribs broke. Many died from their injuries. All the while screaming in pain and begging for someone, anyone, to figure out what was going on.

The earliest recorded instance of what became known as “the dancing plague” dates back to eleventh-century Germany, when a priest grew angry at a group of people partying outside his church during mass, and cursed them to dance without stopping for an entire year as punishment. (They did.) A couple of centuries later, a group of some 200 revelers in the Dutch city of Maastricht started compulsively dancing across a bridge, until said bridge collapsed and drowned them all. Similar spontaneous episodes were recorded in France, Switzerland, and across the Holy Roman Empire.

The most well-known—and best-documented—case of dancing mania, however, took place in the city of Strasbourg (today part of France) in 1518. On a summer’s day, one Frau Troffea stepped out into the middle of the street and, apropos of nothing, started cutting a rug. She kept going and going like that for several days in a row, and it wasn’t long before others joined in. Within a week, there were nearly three dozen people added to the fray, and within a month, roughly 400 people were out dancing in the streets. Local authorities were understandably confused, and decided that the only cure was to let the dancing work itself out naturally.

They shuffled the dancers into empty guild halls and even hired bands of pipers and drummers to give the event some semblance of normalcy. It didn’t work. Over time, the dancers wore themselves out, and dozens died as a result of strokes, heart attacks, and all-around exhaustion.

It bears repeating that this isn’t an urban legend. Dancing mania has been documented by many reputable sources, and the Strasbourg epidemic in particular is supported by local sermons, doctors’ notes, and even contemporaneous writing from its city council. “These outbreaks,” agreed historian John Waller, “represent a real and fascinating enigma.” There were common threads, too. Nearly all of the outbreaks, for instance, took place near one of two rivers: the Rhine and the Moselle. And the dancing plague had all but disappeared by the seventeenth century. So what the hell was going on?

Different theories have circulated over the years. One held that the victims had eaten a particular kind of mold known to grow on rye stalks, which can induce spasms and hallucinations in whoever eats it. Another suspected that the dancers were members of a cult. Another still came out of Italy, where those afflicted were thought to have been bitten by the same species of poisonous wolf spider, causing them to dance in an effort to prevent the venom from fatally mixing with their blood.

These days, historians like Waller believe the dancing plague was actually the result of a trance state, which is known to occur in people exposed to extreme stress, as was certainly the case for the poor, starving, and chronically ill citizens of Strasbourg. At the same time, these populations believed in supernatural forces that could possess their bodies and, say, force them to dance uncontrollably. Put those two factors together and you’ve got a recipe for trouble. It wasn’t until the Reformation came along and challenged Catholicism that the dancing plague suddenly died out, “because the supernaturalist beliefs that fed it gradually disappeared.”

The Macarena doesn’t seem so bad now, does it? 

Michael Hingston is a writer based in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. His new book is “Let’s Go Exploring,” a critical and cultural analysis of the comic strip “Calvin and Hobbes.”

**PEOPLE DANCED FOR SO LONG
THEIR FEET BLEED. THEIR RIBS BROKE.
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SCREAMING IN PAIN AND BEGGING FOR
SOMEONE, ANYONE, TO FIGURE OUT
WHAT WAS GOING ON.**





SHERRY MORAN, April 1981

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JULIA PERREIN, January 1982



COLLEEN CARNEY, August 1976



EVA CARSON, January 1976



DANIELLE GINIBRE, November 1979



JEANETTE STARION, November 1984





SHEILA KENNEDY
October 1987



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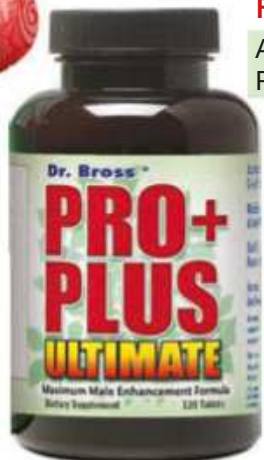


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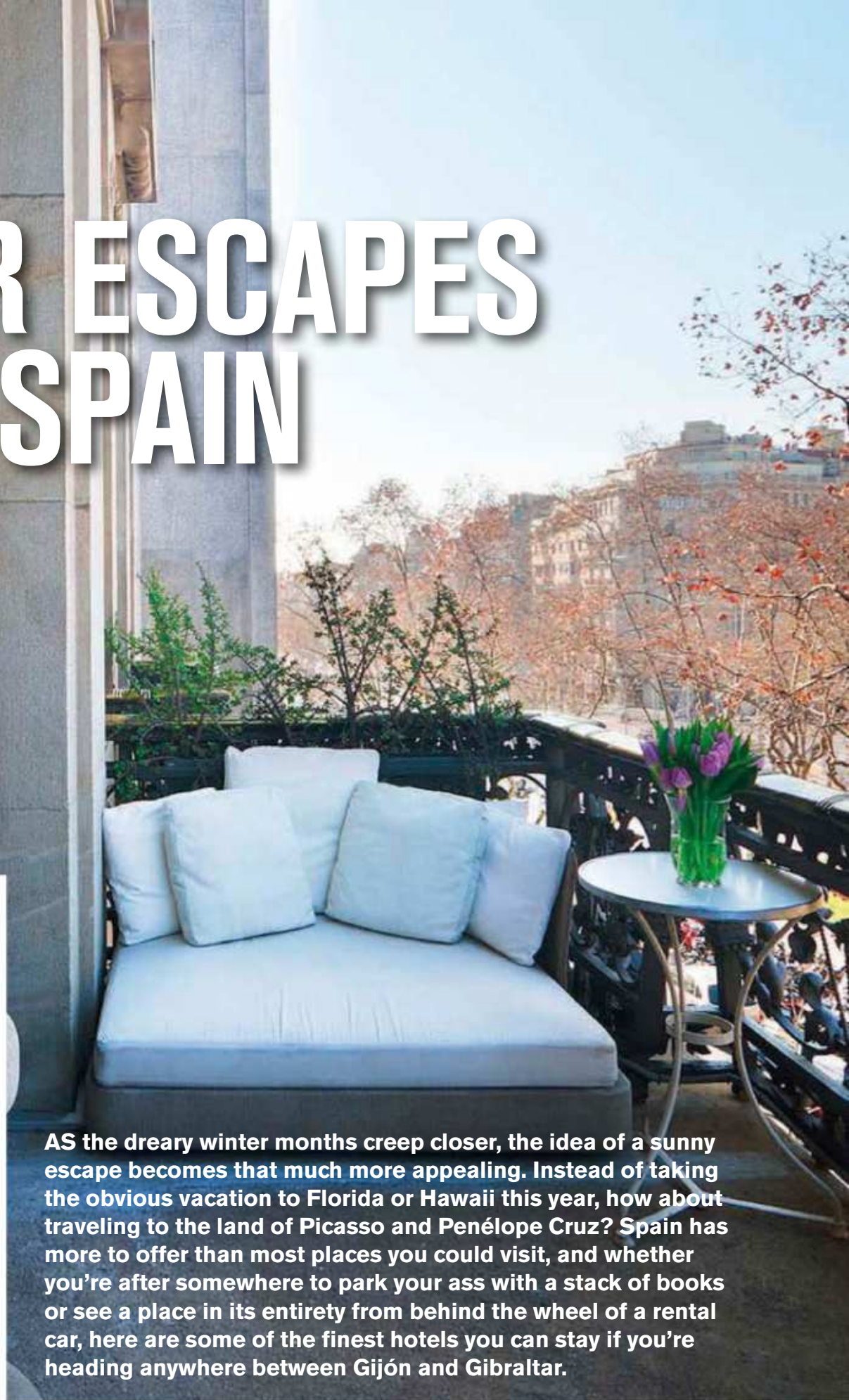
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WINTER ESCAPES IN SPAIN



AS the dreary winter months creep closer, the idea of a sunny escape becomes that much more appealing. Instead of taking the obvious vacation to Florida or Hawaii this year, how about traveling to the land of Picasso and Penélope Cruz? Spain has more to offer than most places you could visit, and whether you're after somewhere to park your ass with a stack of books or see a place in its entirety from behind the wheel of a rental car, here are some of the finest hotels you can stay if you're heading anywhere between Gijón and Gibraltar.

EL PALAUET, BARCELONA

The Catalan capital is one of the most famous cities in the world, and prompts eye-rolling in just about anyone with a friend who visits, when they return home claiming their new favorite city is "Bah-theh-low-nah." But just ignore this and treat yourself to a few days of R&R at El Palauet.

Housed within an art nouveau building constructed in 1906, El Palauet features a rooftop spa that overlooks the vast city, and each suite is assigned its own personal assistant, so that you can take the brainwork out of your trip and hand the reins over to a local who knows the mean streets and can happily set you on your way, no matter what you're after.

Rooms start at around \$600 per night. elpaulet.com





BELMOND LA RESIDENCIA, MALLORCA

For the ultimate middle finger to the outside world, turn your cell phone off and travel to an island. There are several to choose from, but Mallorca is undisputedly one of the lushest spots to let your winter woes melt away.

It's reported that the nightstands at Belmond La Residencia don't have adjacent power outlets, so you can't charge your phone next to your bed (in other words, let the damn thing go dead and get some sleep). If this is the kind of vibe you're seeking, then look no further. This place is more like a small village than a hotel, with just about every amenity you can imagine (including daily treats delivered to your room, which you may not be inclined to leave). Get one of the staff to give you a tour when you arrive, because it's that kind of place.

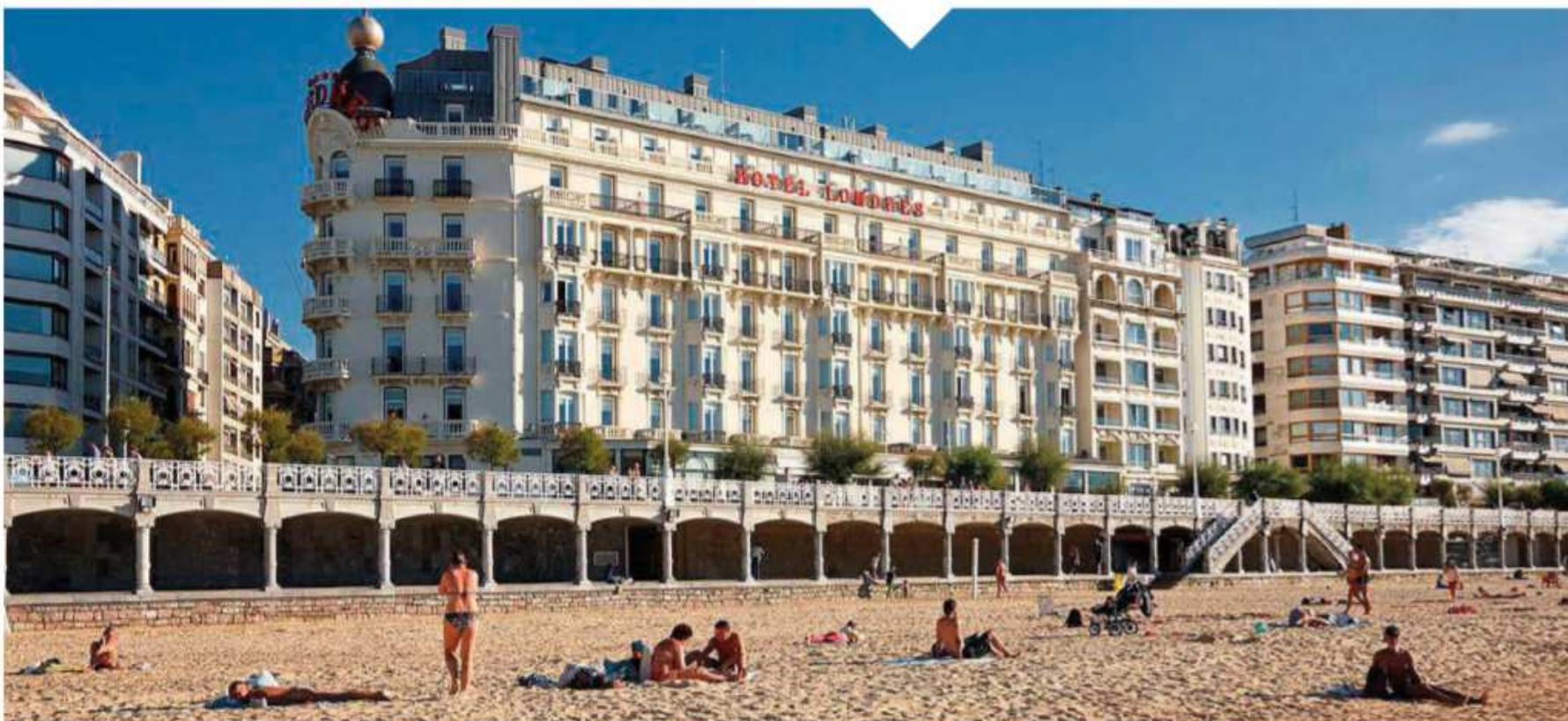
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HOTEL LONDRES Y DE INGLATERRA, SAN SEBASTIAN

A visit to Basque Country will blow you away with its beauty any time of the year. While the weather can be temperamental, one look at the spectacular coastline backed by mountains and it's easy to forgive an afternoon shower. Plus, you can always hit a café and drink large amounts of wine like Jake in Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*.

Hotel Londres puts its best foot forward not trying to be anything more than old-school luxury in one of the most stunning settings imaginable, smack-dab on San Sebastian beach, where Europeans go to escape the more popular vacation destinations. Eschew fancy spa treatments, kick off your shoes, and enjoy the laid-back atmosphere, matched only by the unparalleled service.

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OLD-SCHOOL COOL

THE RAREST VINTAGE FERRARIS

250 LM

IT'S not often that one car can be credited with changing the automotive world as we know it, but if anything comes close, it's the GT40. And while many will confidently espouse that it was the Ford Motor Company nearly bankrupting itself in order to develop this high-performance race car, a move born of a fervent grudge against Enzo Ferrari that changed the course of racing history, it was the GT40 that spurred Ford's winning streak at the coveted Le Mans 24-hour race in the first place.

In 1965, the 250 LM, one of the rarest examples of racing vehicles to screech off the test-track at Fiorano Modenese, was the first to cross the finish line at the grueling Le Mans circuit. It was the sixth year in a row that Ferrari would take the top spot with one of their whips, and the last that Ford could tolerate, after they had been stiffed on a buyout deal with the company over a dispute involving their racing division. Ford went on to spend a small fortune finessing their next entry, and won the next four in a row (the first with New Zealand racing legend Bruce McLaren), breaking Ferrari's domination of the world-famous track.

The iconic 250 LM is the last Ferrari to win Le Mans, giving it a special place in the hearts of Ferrari fans. Only 32 were made, and the most recent one to hit the auction block sold for a cool \$17.6 million in 2015.







DINO 246 GT

THE story of the Dino isn't the happiest, but it did lead to one of the most important engine breakthroughs of the last century. Alfredo "Dino" Ferrari, son of founder Enzo, was only 24 when he died from muscular dystrophy. At the time of his death, however, the talented young engineer was in the final stages of developing a DOHC V6 engine, something that would revolutionize Ferrari's F1 capabilities, and indeed, the car industry itself.

Nimble and lightweight, the Dino did not bear a Ferrari badge, as it was intended as a separate make, one which was more affordable and accessible due to its fewer cylinders and (slightly) more practical road-going tuning. It was one of the first road cars to feature a mid-engine format, and to take on the dominant Porsche 911.

The best thing? Getting into one isn't out of the question. Many examples, from the seventies in particular, are still around (and in good condition, too). Expect to pay north of \$430K for a pristine model, but then again, you're buying a piece of automobile history.



250 GT LUSO

A “grand tour” was once the coming-of-age playtime for young English aristocrats in the seventeenth century. Involving a months-long trip through Europe to get familiar with culture and art, it was a key element in becoming a gentleman, and one which complemented an Oxford education, tailored threads, and a healthy inheritance.

When cars became a thing, however, the grand tour took on a new meaning. Rich Brits could now say, “Bugger Michelangelo and the rest, I’m going to motor to Monaco.” And they did.

The opulent and hedonistic tradition of the grand tour eventually lent its name to the most popular style of sports car the world now knows: the GT. This is one of the more gentlemanly Ferraris to speed out of Modena, and its rarity has only driven its price higher and higher, especially among avid collectors who know that their finite numbers are dwindling fast. 



NEEDLES AND TRAINS

IRVINE WELSH ON MUSIC, WRITING, AND UPDATING HIS *TRAINSPOTTING* LADS.

INTERVIEW BY SETH FERRANTI

IRVINE Welsh broke through big-time with the publication of *Trainspotting* in 1993. The book shocked readers with its raw depiction of young, working-class Scottish friends shooting heroin and searching for kicks in an oppressive, Thatcher-era U.K. When the 1996 movie came out, Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole accused it of glorifying drug use and celebrating moral depravity. Twenty-five years, 15 books, and five movie adaptations later, the Edinburgh-raised Welsh is still doing his thing. His new novel, *Dead Men's Trousers*, which revisits the *Trainspotting* crew as middle-aged men, is as power-packed as his debut.

Penthouse talked to Welsh about his literary career, his punk bands, and his new book.

You began as a musician, right?

It wasn't much, really. Just a lot of fucking around. With the punk scene in London, everybody wanted to be in a band. It was just kids playing instruments and writing songs and making noise. I got involved because I was interested in music, but there wasn't a lot going on in Edinburgh. Not a lot of people interested in making music. A bunch of people who were pretty much the same as me. We were on the scene. We used to congregate around these bars. Scotland was just like any other place.

I started off playing guitar and kind of sang, but I wasn't a good guitarist and I wasn't a good singer. I switched to bass and I wasn't a good bass player. If we had a good drummer, I could never keep time with him. It's like if you play soccer. I'm the kind of guy that wants to play in the World Cup. I don't want to play in the pub league. As a musician, I wanted to play in the Hollywood Bowl.

I came to the conclusion that if you wanted to make an impact, you have to be good at it. I always wanted to do something artistic and make that impact. The music was for pure enjoyment, but it wasn't reaching anybody. In a way, it was just about trying to imitate the music that I liked. Eventually I switched to writing, and here we are. The creativity was there—I was just trying to find the right vehicle for me.

What made you leave Edinburgh in 1978?

We heard about the punk scene in London and I finally went down there. Meeting people, going to gigs, doing stuff together.

I was in a couple of punk bands with a couple of friends. I was always fucked up and got kicked out of a lot of bands. It was because of that that I never really played music professionally. I could never quite get it to come out how I wanted it to.

I was lucky because my auntie was down there. She doted on me. It was like a second home for me. I was spoiled in a way. It wasn't like I was living on the mean streets of London, squatting and the like. It gave me a way to go out and get involved with the bands. It was always a collaboration, and I was always the person that people wanted to collaborate with. I had a lot of ideas. I wasn't very capable musically, but my ideas were strong. I used to write ballads. It was stories set to music. That was how I became a writer. Writing ballads and eventually getting rid of the music.

What did music mean to you back then?

When you grow up in Scotland, it's a very political culture. Music is such an emotional thing. It made me want to express myself. That's why I started playing in bands in the first place, and eventually started writing. Music is about beautiful songs and these amazing principles. It goes through this whole range of human emotions. It reflects on the cultural ideas and beauty of the people who are making it. That is very important, in my point of view.

It's interesting, because technology now takes away a lot of these things, and that kind of takes the barriers down. You can have concepts and ideas and make them a reality. It's so much easier to realize your ideas and get them out there than it was back when I wanted to do it. If I was a kid now, I probably would be involved in something like that because of the technology.

Do you have a favorite artist?

David Bowie is obviously the main influence for my generation. What he did is make a road map of what's cool. It wasn't just entertainment and good music—he really kind of liberated us all. He got me into the Velvet Underground and Iggy Pop. He got me into soul and more. He shared his enthusiasm. By sharing his life experiences in his music, he defined what my generation and culture has become. He influenced punk rock and performance rock—even Lady Gaga and Madonna and all that. He's a huge influence on me and who I am.



Irvine Welsh arriving for the *Filth* premiere in London, 2013.

Can you talk about the role of music in your books?

I try to replicate how music sounds in my writing—with the characters and how they interact with others. The characters kind of come alive through the music. I have playlists for certain characters. In my writing, I always wanted to have the impact music had on me. Particularly in the early days. The characters make all kinds of references to music in these books. I would make playlists and play these songs as I wrote, and it really helped to bring it all together.

What's it been like to branch out into musicals and plays?

I did a musical called *Blackpool* with Vic Godard of the band Subway Sect, and also *Creatives* with [composer] Laurence Mark Wythe in Chicago. It's just fantastic to condense the ideas that you have into a musical. Nobody can be an expert in every art, but the idea is kind of independent of form. When you realize the idea can take shape and flourish as a film, a novel, a play, or even a musical, it's amazing. If you can find someone to collaborate with that can help you to bring that idea to life, it's great.

The nature of your books has made you a literary rock star. Ever feel pressure to live up to the hype?

Everybody wants to get fucked up with me. They give me drugs and drinks all the time. When I go out to the clubs, everybody

always wants to party with me. When I was younger it was awesome, but then I got a bit fed up with it. It's always nice to be asked to party and the like, but sometimes you don't feel up to it.

What are you most proud of in your career?

I think when I look back, it's about meeting people. When you're under a lot of pressure, you don't always come across as good as you can. It's very rare that I've acted like a total asshole. That's the thing I'm most proud of. It's quite easy to be standoffish or whatever, but I've always tried to make time for people. And in my position, it's not always easy to do that. I didn't always deal with that so well, but I've gotten a lot better. These are the things that stick with you, and these are the things that define who you are.

Any regrets in life or professionally?

Not really, no. I don't regret the things I've done, but sometimes it's the things that I haven't done. There are places I haven't traveled to and stuff of that nature. Certain things that I would have liked to get involved in. But other than that, I don't really have any regrets. I'm not the kind of guy that's big on that. You can only be the way you are. I don't consciously try to get attention with comments and whatnot. I just fire things out, and that's the way it comes out.

"DAVID BOWIE IS OBVIOUSLY THE MAIN INFLUENCE FOR MY GENERATION. WHAT HE DID IS MAKE A ROAD MAP OF WHAT'S COOL. IT WASN'T JUST ENTERTAINMENT AND GOOD MUSIC—HE REALLY KIND OF LIBERATED US ALL."



Trainspotting



"IT'S VERY RARE THAT I'VE ACTED LIKE A TOTAL ASSHOLE. THAT'S THE THING I'M MOST PROUD OF. IT'S QUITE EASY TO BE STANDOFFISH OR WHATEVER, BUT I'VE ALWAYS TRIED TO MAKE TIME FOR PEOPLE."

What music are you listening to today?

I started DJing again. I listen to a lot of techno and house. It's a weird thing—most of the guys into DJing house music are older. All these old-school house parties, it's kind of crazy. It's nice to do that again. I'm usually one of those guys at the club listening to the music all night.

Who's your favorite *Trainspotting* character?

I think maybe Spud or Tommy, because they're basically good guys. Renton is probably okay, a decent guy. Sick Boy is very self-centered, egotistical, and manipulative. Begbie in his own way is as well.

How do you keep all the story and character timelines straight with your overlapping books?

I've had the same editor for a long time. He knows a lot of my stuff very well and he'll tell me, "Well, this guy actually died." It becomes like the Marvel Universe. You see characters basically as tools to do their job. You think, *Oh, I want to write this around this theme, and I've got my toolbox that can help me do this.* Sometimes you forge new tools and then you have to bring the other ones back, but you do create a universe and you have to be aware of what's going on in it.

As soon as I finish a book, I've forgotten it in a month. I'm not really thinking about anything I've done previously, so

sometimes I may get a little memory jog: *Well, this guy's been in this book.* I'll probably go back to the book and find out what happened to him. It's just trying to remember and trying to sort of patch up where you've seen this character before, who their associates are, and relying on that as well to have some knowledge of it.

How did it feel to make the *Trainspotting* guys middle-aged?

I think you will see these guys changed. If *Trainspotting* was about friendship and betrayal, then *Dead Men's Trousers* is kind of a redemption thing. They're looking back on their lives, not necessarily with regret, but looking back at the mistakes they made and trying to get some kind of resolution, some kind of redemption. They're still very optimistic in a certain way, but it doesn't quite work out the way they really want it to. The book has matured in a lot of ways—I'm much more mature and responsible now—but these guys aren't quite that way. If people are mature, it gets a bit boring. They're more persons of their own vanities and vices. ✂

Seth Ferranti is a former federal prisoner whose writings have been featured on VICE, Don Diva, and Gorilla Convict. He's also the author of the crime series Street Legends, and the comic series Crime Comix.



GAL PALS

Enjoy this sampling from German publisher Goliath, from their new book *Young Lesbian Girlfriends*.

Find more titles at goliathbooks.com











I WANNA BE ADORED

Our November Pet of the Month Ella Silver could charm the knickers off a nun. Her posh British accent turns us into pathetic lumps of man jelly, never mind the fact that she's seven thousand times hotter than any other woman from the United Kingdom. Ella has that unmistakable, dry British humor that most of us Americans are too dumb to grasp. We worship all 6'1" of this gorgeous knockout.

Photography: Thom & Jheri • Lighting: Jay Mourad

Hair, Makeup & Wardrobe: Teri Groves























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ELLA SILVER ◊ NOVEMBER 2018 PET OF THE MONTH



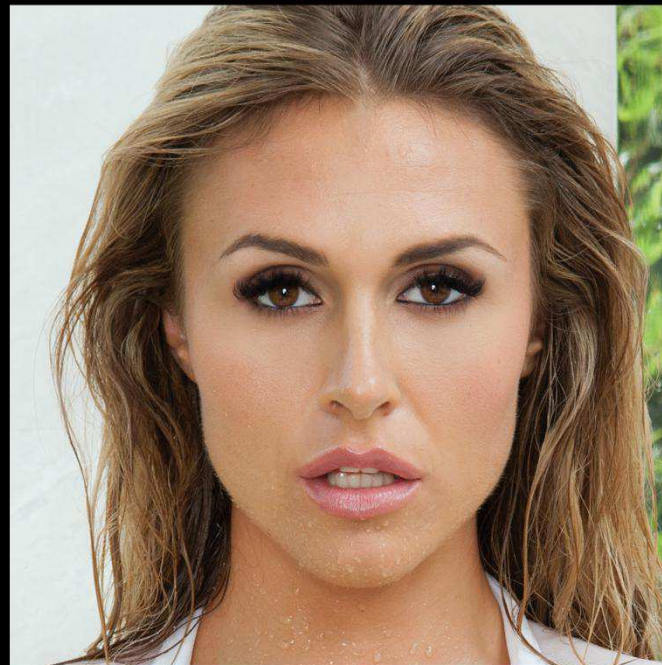




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SILVER NOVEMBER 2018 PET OF THE MONTH



ELLA SILVER

Vital Stats:

32E-28-35

28 years old

6'1"

Hometown: Cambridge, England

Does your British politeness ever get in the way of your insatiable sex drive?

Not really. Over the years, I have finely tuned how to ask men to "fuck me in the arse" in a polite and respectable manner. *[Laughs]* I'm not so polite in the bedroom, so it's never been an issue.

You do a lot of crazy cosplay in your cam shows. Is there anything you won't do?

Nope! I'll try anything at least twice. The crazier it is, the more I want to try it!

What's your favorite way to relax?

I love to read! Any fictional book I can stick my nose in and forget about where I am for a few hours is golden for me.

You seem like a secret thrasher. How many fights have you been in?

One. I wouldn't pick a fight with me. I think most people can see that and so have never tried!

What's the best part about being a bombshell blonde British babe?

Traveling the world to have my picture taken!

If you weren't in the adult world, what would you be doing?

Well, before this I had a horse-riding school in Italy. I would like to become a pilot one day, though. Commercial planes. I like to learn, so I'd probably throw myself into learning something new.

What's the biggest misconception about British chicks?

Everyone seems to think we have really bad teeth. Mine are perfectly white and straight, thank you very much! Although I might be cheating, as I'm half American.

What do you love about America?

The space. Growing up in the U.K., everything is crammed in because we have no room. My house could fit into most American garages. Also, your customer service and manners. Everyone is infinitely more cheerful here. I like cheerful people.

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GENERATION XANAX

HOW AMERICA'S BENZO HABIT HAS RESHAPED POP CULTURE.

BY MILES RAYMER

FIFTY million prescriptions for alprazolam—Xanax's generic name—were filled in the U.S. in 2013, making it the most prescribed psychiatric medication in the country. Prescriptions were rising by nearly 10 percent a year back then, with no indication of slowing down, so 2018 numbers are presumably much higher. And judging by how quickly a casual complaint about an upcoming transatlantic flight is met these days by an offer of a couple of "Xans" to smooth out the trip, there are untold legions of additional Americans taking it off-prescription for at least semi-legitimate reasons. Xanax belongs to America's most popular family of mood-altering drugs, called benzodiazepines. Even if you only count users with prescriptions, benzos are more popular than MDMA, LSD, heroin, and meth.

It's impossible for a drug to permeate a society that thoroughly without leaving a mark on its culture, and the popularity of benzodiazepines—Klonopin, Valium, and Ativan are the other top antianxiety meds in this drug family—among America's creative class has only amplified its impact. Four decades after Xanax first hit the market, this particular benzo surrounds us completely, a primary element in our cultural atmosphere.

The drugs we take have been defining the aesthetics of our times since the dawn of pop culture. Back during the Jazz Age, when radio and records came within reach of the working-class, weed-smoking big band leaders became our first rock stars. Psychedelics gave the sixties their Day-Glo vividness. The hard-edged gloss that got wrapped around nearly every cultural product created during the eighties was so clearly derived from massive piles of cocaine it's become a cliché. The style of the nineties was shaped by "heroin chic" and Ecstasy-fueled rave visuals.

The past decade was all about weed, as marijuana began to get legalized and *Adult Swim*-style stoner humor took over the mainstream. But this decade's been about benzos. Deeper into our century, when people look back at the media we're making and consuming today, they'll see the influence of benzodiazepines as clearly as we see coke residue on Reagan-era cultural artifacts. As more of us get on benzos, the dominant cultural aesthetic is getting softer, gentler, and more

compatible with the cozy benzo high. Opiates get more press, but in truth we're living in the Age of Xanax, this drug being the most popular antianxiety med in a world where anxiety has become the dominant mental state.

How we got here is clear enough. Our brains' insatiable hunger for information drove us to connect them to fat data-pipelines and we gorged on the ceaseless flow. Then we required increasingly more extreme stuff—from esoteric porn genres to hyperpolarized culture war propaganda—in order to get a response from our fried-out dopamine receptors. Like any addict who's drifted into the ugly side of a bender, we're reaching for tranquilizers to take the edge off, only we're doing it collectively, as an entire nation.

Everyone on this planet right now is fucking crazy. Life under Trump is a nightmare state of doom just over the horizon for anyone on any part of the political spectrum, whether it's liberals freaking out over the executive branch's relentless attacks on civil rights or conservative MAGA types constantly on frantic guard against the deep-state coup attempt or an invasion by MS-13 that they've been told are inevitable.

War, the economy, the environment, hackers, and the general sense that we've already crossed some invisible line on a path toward destruction have us all perpetually on edge, and since we can't seem to turn off the endless news-feed of everything bad happening in the world, we feel anxiety all the time. The human mind can only handle so much negative stimulation without medication, or else it falls apart entirely.

Opiates are brutally effective at reducing that agitation, but they cloud the mind. And in a hyperstratified society like ours, creative elites want a better class of drugs than the working-class. According to the prejudices of the day, opioids are for Appalachian Trump voters—expendable, blue-collar hillbillies fueling small-town drug economies with workers' comp checks.

Benzos, on the other hand, are a more refined downer, designed to cure a more cerebral affliction—a brain that can't stop working. There's a not-so-subtle hint of a brag in the way a lot of people in the creative class discuss their anxiety, and the way they medicate it, implying that their real problem is that they're literally just too smart for their own good.



ANKIE

BENZOS FEEL LIKE THE BLISSFUL FIRST FRACTION OF A SECOND AFTER AN ORGASM, STRETCHED OUT INTO HOURS.

And since benzodiazepines give the illusion of acting on the mind and not the body, with its icky, working-class associations, it's easy to ignore the fact that they're highly addictive and extremely dangerous when mixed with the most common intoxicants, such as alcohol.

But the main thing is that they work. They really, really work.

■ ■ ■

INSIDE our brains we have millions of receptors for a neurotransmitter called gamma-aminobutyric acid, or GABA, which, among other roles, regulates the neurons in our brains and central nervous system, reducing their activity when we get too stressed. If something lights up our primitive fight-or-flight response—a loud noise, a traumatic memory, an article about climate change—GABA can apply the brakes and slow things down so we don't cross over into full-blown panic. Benzodiazepines work by flooding our GABA receptors and binding them all together, telling sweet lies to our nervous system that everything's fine, that there's nothing to worry about after all.

That state of anxiety-free grace—a feeling of complete all-rightness—is what we spend our whole lives chasing. Reducing the amount of stress the world inflicts on us, whether it's financial or emotional or societal, dictates so much of our behavior, from recreational pursuits, self-improvement regimens, and self-medicating, to career choices, relationship choices, and devotion to domestic sheltering. Popping a Xanax gets you there without the work, and not only much quicker than through non-chemical means, but deeper into the state of chill. I can say from personal experience that a month's worth of daily meditation can't hold a candle to the worry-negating effects of .5 milligrams of alprazolam.

Benzos make you feel like you're floating in a warm bubble bath the size of an ocean. They feel like the blissful first fraction of a second after an orgasm, stretched out into hours. They feel like an off-switch for the part of your brain that gives a shit, allowing you to float above the world as aloof and unbothered as a cloud.

When I'm anxious, the inside of my head feels like a crowded rush-hour subway platform, with different worries elbowing their way to the front of the pack and yelling for my attention. On Xanax, it feels like I'm the only person in a Greek and Roman museum wing, walking in pristine silence, surrounded by nothing but air and light and marble, smooth and serene. After feeling crushed by anxiety, it's like being weightless. That sensation alone would be enough to get hooked on, even if it wasn't one of the most dangerously addictive chemical compounds we've ever invented.

The Xanax aesthetic is a way of externalizing that sensation of absolute detached mental tranquility. It's an utterly unbothered style, without the haziness that comes with more stoner-y perspectives. Benzos clear the mind rather than cloud it (at least when you take them on their own), so their vibe is soft but crystalline, uncluttered and unchaotic. It is, above all other things, intensely comfy.

The current popularity of muted pastel colors—from album covers to hair dye—is part of the benzo look, whether they're used as fields of flat tones to create a perfectly placid mood, or combined in soft ombré gradients to add the suggestion of languorous movement and the floaty, bubble bath sensation of a brain awash in friendly neurotransmitters.

Pastels fit nicely with the trend of dressing softly. The rise of benzo use in the U.S. has corresponded with a steep decline in anything approaching formal attire. T-shirts and sneakers are now



ILLUSTRATION BY MOLLY SODA





ILLUSTRATION BY MOLLY SODA

FOR PEOPLE WITH OCD, THE FEELING OF A BENZO FLOODING YOUR GABA RECEPTORS GIVES THE SAME SENSATION OF JUST-RIGHTNESS THAT YOU GET FROM INDULGING WHATEVER ORGANIZATIONAL KINK YOU FEEL COMPELLED BY.

acceptable in settings that only recently demanded suits and ties, including weddings and funerals. By calling sweats and sneakers “athleisure” wear, and making them more expensive, we’ve been able to justify bringing the fleecy comfort of homebound self-care days into our everyday public lives. The more tranquilizers we consume as a nation, the more we’re starting to dress like the zonked-out, sweat-suited residents of a psych ward.

Orderly minimalism is another major visual component of the style. Things in tidy rows and columns can soothe the parts of our brains that flare up in people with anxiety, particularly those with obsessive-compulsive disorder. For people with OCD, the feeling of a benzo flooding your GABA receptors gives the same

sensation of just-rightness that you get from indulging whatever organizational kink you feel compelled by.

So it’s no surprise that advertising has become increasingly tidy, as well as flat, minimalist, and pastel in recent years, particularly in advertising aimed at urban creative professionals and those who aspire to an urban creative lifestyle. In the past, ads fought loudly for our attention, but in a world where overstimulation has become the norm, serenity has become a valuable product. If people are willing to shell out good money for inner peace—the meditation app Headspace is currently worth about a quarter of a billion dollars—giving consumers even a small taste of calm during their commute or while they’re overstimulating themselves on the

internet is like giving them an expensive gift.

And if that sensation maybe reminds them of the tranquil feeling they get from having a benzo in their system—or even happens to vibe with the wave they’re on from the Klonopin that they popped first thing that morning—that wouldn’t be bad either.

Which is why New York City subways and Instagram are so plastered with ads showing reasonably hip, youngish city dwellers resting peacefully on their backs in tidy arrangements against tonal color-on-color backgrounds. Whether the product is retro-inspired eyeglasses or memory foam mattresses or pills for erectile dysfunction doesn’t matter at this point. This kind of starkly serene late-capitalist still life has taken on a life of its own as a visual genre. There isn’t a contemporary artist working who’s doing a better job of capturing our current moment’s distinctive blend of hyperconsumerism and tranquilized shellshock.



MUSICIANS have responded to benzos with a push into sonic softness. Despite the tumultuous state of the world, angry music is out of style. Today’s most relevant pop artists aren’t raging against the machine, but creating cozy sonic nooks where listeners can hide out and forget about the machine altogether. Drums have become muted, singing has become more whispery, and loud electric guitars have almost entirely disappeared from the Top 40.

But unlike the warm soft rock of the Quaalude-heavy seventies, the artists whose work has spread the most easily and organically into the zeitgeist today are cool and more than a little aloof.

Kanye West’s album *808s & Heartbreak*—whose sense of detached loss should be familiar to anyone who’s dealt with the death of a family member through a veil of pills—gave pop and hip-hop its first taste of benzo cool. Frank Ocean has become one of the most important performers of his generation singing about intense emotions held at arm’s length, in the way that benzos allow you to observe your own feelings as if they were happening to someone else. Lana Del Rey’s cult icon status comes from her ability to channel a cryptic, otherworldly glamor inspired by the sensation of being “Xanned” halfway into another plane of existence.

But no one has made art more openly indebted to benzodiazepines than today’s young rappers. And what their art says about them says a lot about the dark turn that the Xanax boom has taken.

Rappers have been at the leading edge of Xanax’s cultural takeover from the beginning. Back when the rest of the pop world was still high on Molly and Obama-era optimism, Southern mixtape rappers like Lil Wayne, Gucci Mane, and Future promoted Xanax as part of a world-obliterating pharmaceutical cocktail, mixed in with Vicodin, Percocet, and prescription cough syrup containing codeine and promethazine.

Sometime just after the beginning of the decade, a pack of young, independent hip-hop artists emerged through free platforms like SoundCloud and YouTube with a sound that opened up the ratcheting rhythms and dialed-back tempos of Southern hip-hop to a breezier atmosphere. Rappers like A\$AP Rocky, Lil B, Main Attrakcionz, and Yung Lean shook off the suffocating darkness of hip-hop’s lean-sipping years with dreamy flows over weightless beats that were more New Age than boom-bap. Fittingly, the style earned itself the name “cloud rap.”

This new breed of hip-hop phenoms made music that had the same spacey, lighter-than-air feel of a benzo high, and it didn’t take much critical guesswork to make the connection. Yung Lean rapped about his Xanax habit before it landed him in the hospital. The scene’s spiritual leader, A\$AP Yams, who, among other things, helped curate its aesthetic on his cult-popular Tumblr account, had Xanax bars tattooed on his arms next to the words “Black Out,” and eventually died from mixing it with the codeine-based lean (aka sizzurp or purple drank). Cloud-rap-adjacent artists like Travis Scott, Earl Sweatshirt, and Danny Brown talked openly about popping benzos for both business and pleasure.

Cloud rap was a relatively niche phenomenon that happened mostly underground and online, but a wave of musicians that it inspired have spent the past few years upending the rap game and making inroads deep into the mainstream.

So-called “SoundCloud rappers” like Lil Uzi Vert, 6ix9ine, Smokepurpp, Kodak Black, and XXXTentacion have scandalized the hip-hop world by embracing unorthodox influences like emo, and scandalized the pop world by attracting massive teen fan bases to their Instagrammed rock star lifestyles, which frequently feature reckless levels of benzo intoxication (not to mention face tattoos and sexual abuse allegations).

This strain of hip-hop occupies a remarkably similar place on the pop landscape as alternative rock did back in the nineties—a

semi-official sound of alienated youth that’s managed to sneak past pop’s old guard and get its hand on the wheel of the zeitgeist. It’s dominating the pop charts, setting the stylistic agenda that even superstars are following, and giving the media a field day with outrageous, headline-making behavior. It’s like Nirvana multiplied by the dozens, which makes it fitting that so many of them have adopted Kurt Cobain’s uniform of ripped jeans, chin-length dyed hair, and

cat’s-eye sunglasses.

The major sonic difference between this new soundtrack for dissatisfied teens and nineties alternative rock is mostly a matter of volume. Where Cobain and his peers got their angst out through loud, distorted guitars and guttural screams, Xanax rap is spacey, quieter, and cool to the touch. The beats shuffle more than they bang, laced with twinkling synthesizers and softly susurrating white noise, and the vocals tend to be delivered in a dissociated melodic mumble.

When this almost abstractly chill sound is paired with the genre’s lyrical fixation on despair and death, the results can be profoundly unsettling. It would be one thing to hear a kid in his early twenties scream, “Push me to the edge/ all my friends are dead”—we have a template for that kind of thing, and rage feels like a natural reaction to desperation. Hearing Lil Uzi Vert slurring it with an aura of absolute benzo-inspired detachment—sounding like he’s tranquilized beyond the point of being physically able to give a fuck about whether he lives or dies—leaves you shaken.

Xanax rap invokes a feeling of genuine nihilism that makes Gen X’s rebellious phase look like a tantrum. And Xanax rappers’ behavior backs it up. To anyone who knows how benzos work—how easy it is to take too many, how wrong things can go when you mix them with other substances, how effortlessly you can end up hooked on them—the level of benzo abuse that these kids engage in is jaw-dropping.

**TODAY'S MOST
RELEVANT POP ARTISTS
AREN'T RAGING AGAINST THE
MACHINE, BUT CREATING
COZY SONIC NOOKS WHERE
LISTENERS CAN FORGET
ABOUT THE MACHINE
ALTOGETHER.**

So is their age. When Lil Pump hit a million followers on Instagram, he celebrated with a cake shaped like a giant Xanax bar, and did the same two months later when he turned 17. Lil Xan was still below the legal drinking age when he began his come-up with an image centered around continuous pill popping. (He's since publicly sworn off alprazolam, and has repeatedly talked about changing his stage name, although he hasn't followed through yet.) Lil Peep, who'd collected the most "voice of a generation" accolades of anyone in the cadre, died from overdosing on fentanyl and alprazolam when he was only 21.

Music has always been the art form with the closest relationship to drug culture, uniquely able to both reflect trends in getting high and to influence them. It's impossible to imagine *Sgt. Pepper's* being made without LSD; it's just as impossible to imagine LSD becoming as mainstream as it did without *Sgt. Pepper's*. (TV and movies are occasionally able to capture an era's druggy identity—you can feel benzos in *Atlanta's* bemused detachment, *Big Little Lies'* dissociated trauma, and the all-too-relatable robots in *Westworld*, *Blade Runner 2049*, and *Ex Machina*—but their size and budget constraints make it difficult.) But social media, blindingly fast-moving, infinitely mutable, and by now as much a conduit for aesthetics as information, could be taking over.

Most of the look and feel of this era of anxiety and panic barely held in check by massive amounts of tranquilizers first originated on Tumblr, the social media platform that only minimally blipped on the mainstream's radar but which reshaped youth culture in ways that are only just now making themselves apparent. Tumblr is where much of the Xanax rap trend got started. It's where the cult of Lana Del Rey grew its deepest roots. And it's the birthplace of vaporwave, an obscure internet trend that's had a disproportionately large influence on pop culture.

■ ■ ■

THE term "vaporwave" has been used to denote both a musical genre and a visual style, but it's better understood as an aesthetic reaction to an environment of nonstop overstimulation—the endless scrolling content of a Tumblr dashboard, for example. Vaporwave's fixation on vintage synthesizers and computer graphics extends from a nostalgia for a time where it was still possible to think of technology as an unalloyed good. Its austere compositions and staticky lo-fi distortion reflect the sensation of interacting with the world through a screen—a side effect of both internet overuse and benzo highs.

These days, social-media styles can slide frictionlessly into mainstream design, and bits of the vaporwave vocabulary have propagated throughout pop culture. For instance, classical marble sculptures have been a favorite visual motif of vaporwave artists, their emotive expressions carved out of cold stone standing in nicely for either the blank dissociative state of a panic attack, or at least simple digital-age alienation.

Within a short time of the classical sculpture craze starting on Tumblr, there were classical sculptures everywhere, on electropop album covers, Urban Outfitters graphic tees, and luxury clothing ads. It's true that designers have returned again and again to classical art throughout the years, and it's also true that it's very easy to slap a cutout photo of a marble bust on top of a gradient and call it design, but there's more of a resonance in those images right now than familiarity and corner-cutting can explain.

(Apparently these days we just prefer seeing faces carved from marble than ones made from flesh.)

Social media has provided a way for our growing culture-wide weakness for benzos to find an artistic outlet. It's also been a way for the drug culture to aestheticize its Xanax kick.

Despite their best efforts at policing, Instagram and Snapchat are full of shadowy users advertising benzos and other substances in tightly framed close-up photos of pills and powders in high-contrast white and blue and pink. Drug dealers have been using social media platforms as ersatz e-commerce sites for years, which isn't too surprising if you know how adaptable drug dealers have been to the changing digital economy.

What is surprising is that benzo users have adopted the same techniques to document the drugs that they're consuming, not selling, and that they outnumber dealers by a wide margin. Benzo users and abusers are finding each other on social media to share advice, support, and dealer hookups, and also to simply document their habits in photos, digital collages, and journal-like captions.

And of course, the content—or art, or whatever you want to call it—that they're creating around their benzo habits lends itself easily to vaporwave and other benzo-inspired aesthetics, resulting in moody, stylized images where pills and selfies and digital artifacts coexist side by side, blurring together content, identity, and antianxiety drugs in dizzying ways. Their attempts to find a chemical escape hatch from the constant churn of our digitally tethered lives becomes even more fuel for the machine. It's no wonder they feel like they need Xanax to keep their heads straight.

Pharmaceutical companies have spent much of the past century developing new ways to stroke our GABA receptors and make our anxiety-riddled lives bearable, and each time they come up with a new one it tends to follow the same narrative arc. First they're prescribed to the acutely ill, and then to more or less anyone who asks. Eventually they're everywhere, and

used with increasing abandon, until enough people decide that it's a problem and they're restricted or banned entirely. Whether they're called barbiturates or Quaaludes or Librium or Valium, we've gone through the same cycle over and over again.

Considering the apparent uptick in celebrity deaths involving benzodiazepines over the past few years, and the increasing danger of recreational abuse now that unethical dealers are passing off fentanyl as Xanax bars, it feels like we should be nearing the end of peak Xanax. At some point we're going to have to reckon with our culture-wide benzo habit. We can't go on like this any more than we could go on drinking and smoking like we did in the Eisenhower days.

Then again, who knows? Maybe we can. The things that are driving us to swallow tranquilizers by the truckload don't seem to be going away anytime soon. There don't seem to be very many people these days who aren't walking around under the constant weight of some colossal existential worry, whether it's the possibility of civilizational collapse or just making rent. There's a growing feeling that things are spinning too far, too fast, for anyone to control anymore. And the easiest way—sometimes the only way—to get rid of that fear is with a little white bar.

It's possible the Age of Xanax is just getting started. 

Miles Raymer is an artist and writer living in New York City.



HOT LINES

CONSENT CULTURE: A WAR ON SEXUALITY

BY LEAH MCSWEENEY

I'M disgusted with women. I know I'm not allowed to say that. But as the #MeToo movement becomes unhinged and we watch innocent, clumsy, unwanted sexual advances get lumped into the same category as rape, where women weaponize a movement—an important and much needed movement—to garner sympathy and claim victimhood, I think about the real victims of sexual assault, not those claiming they were traumatized by a coworker trying to kiss them. Their stories are getting lost in the mayhem as the angry mob storms on, looking for the next high-profile target they'll mark for eternal punishment.

Third-wave feminism has gained immense power, and where there is power, there is corruption. Women now have the power to ruin any man's life with one accusation. It doesn't have to be substantiated or proven. Due process no longer exists because we have trial by Twitter. Lately it doesn't matter what the "crime" is, there's a demand for lifelong consequences. No questions are asked, and if you do dare to question, you are deemed an apologist and misogynist.

People, companies, brands are all operating on fear rather than reason. Women are believed automatically. I don't think anyone should have that type of power based on their gender; just because we're women does not mean we won't abuse it. We have already seen examples of women using this movement for personal gain and revenge. Those despicable women are hurting all of us by doing this. They are damaging a much-needed awareness concerning a very real threat that women face every day.

Along with the excesses and overreaching—and the co-opting for selfish reasons—we've seen as the #MeToo movement expands and morphs, there's also a viewpoint on human sexuality at work that I find naive and unrealistic. It's a perspective that oversimplifies sexuality, rationalizing it, demanding it be neat and tidy.

Last month, the *New York Times* published an essay written by 30-year-old Courtney Sender for their Modern Love section. In the piece, Sender tells a story of a 24-year-old man she met on Tinder, a guy she invited over in the middle of a snowstorm and they ended up having sex. Her Tinder date complied with all the rules of modern politically correct culture, asking for consent before every touch or kiss, a self-policing that began to frustrate Sender and suggested to her that her date, though just six years younger, had learned some different rules when it came to hooking up. But she liked him. And thought things were going well, especially when, during their second hookup, he told her he'd cook her dinner the next time he saw her. That never happened. He stopped contacting her.

Though initially almost irked by her Tinder date's consent questions, by the way it seemed to imply she wasn't able to simply say no herself if she didn't want to do something, she came around to his solicitous style, and viewed it as thoughtful. However—and this is the thrust of her essay—she had a big problem with being ghosted after two hookups.

"I was left thinking that our culture's current approach to consent is too narrow," Sender writes. "A culture of consent should be a culture of care for the other person, of seeing and honoring another's humanity and finding ways to engage in sex while keeping our humanity intact. It should be a culture of making each other feel good, not bad."

According to Sender (who should really be refraining from any sexual relationships due to her lack of maturity), she now thinks she is entitled to be cared about by whomever she chooses to have sex with. It's like Gilead, except men are prisoners held captive by needy women. But wait a second. Haven't women desired the freedom to hook up like men with no emotional strings attached? Haven't we been partaking in Slut Walks and fighting for sexual liberation? Isn't this what we wanted?

As Camille Paglia once wrote, "With freedom comes risk and responsibility." This overbearing consent culture, with its excessive intervention into sexual relations between men and women (powered by a feminism calling not just for equity, for societal and legal fairness for women, but for women to be viewed as fragile victims-in-waiting, incapable of agency), begs the following question: Can casual hookup culture coexist with #MeToo and the new gospel of consent?

Toward the end of her piece, Sender writes: "I wish we could view consent as something that's less about caution and more about care for the other person, the entire person, both during an encounter and after, when we're often at our most vulnerable."

Consent culture is not preventing rape, it's not promoting healthy sexual relationships, and it's not stopping sexual harassment in the workplace. In many ways, it's ruining sex and confusing people. Rape is real, as is sexual abuse. Those things need to be addressed. But this oppressive, politically correct regime is like a religion, monitoring the way we express ourselves in all walks of life, but especially in the bedroom. The irony is that these so-called rules are coming from individuals who claim to be "progressives."

An outlook on sexuality this stifling, rigid, and regressive is the furthest thing from enlightened and liberated. It is totally authoritarian. It's a complete regression from the sexual freedom I enjoyed as a



AN OUTLOOK ON SEXUALITY THIS STIFLING, RIGID, AND REGRESSIVE IS THE FURTHEST THING FROM ENLIGHTENED AND LIBERATED. IT IS TOTALLY AUTHORITARIAN.

teenager and young adult in the late nineties and early aughts—the freedom that was fought for by second-wave feminists who were attempting to free themselves of the parental supervision and restrictive fifties culture that treated women as perpetual victims. How have feminists come full circle?

Sexuality is a part of every human's life, and it's vast, complex, and layered. Sometimes it's gross, and sometimes it's painful—emotionally and/or physically. Sometimes it's like wading into a mosquito-infested swamp in the pitch-black darkness, and sometimes it's like being catapulted into the fourth dimension with your soul connecting to your lover. We use sexuality to connect with people, to control people,

to escape. Even to hurt. Some sex is illegal and completely immoral. Sexuality is an animal instinct. And it's not always easy to navigate.

In our current puritanical climate, there's an obsession with the articulation of boundaries during sexual interaction. There's a call for defining every sexual nuance, but that's impossible. Sexuality cannot be put into a perfectly wrapped box with a bow on top. It's far too complicated for that. 

Leah McSweeney is founder and CEO of Married to the Mob clothing line and cohost of the podcast Improper Etiquette, with hip-hop radio personality Laura Stylez.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT WHEN THE ACCUSED IS FEMALE, THE ACCUSER MALE

BY ALAN M. DERSHOWITZ

SOME radical feminists are now claiming that it is impossible for a woman to sexually harass a man, because men in general dominate women in our society. The issue came to a head in a recent case reported in *The New York Times* involving New York University German and Comparative Literature professor Avital Ronell, who is accused of sexually harassing a young male graduate student. (She was in her sixties, he in his twenties.)

The student alleged that his advisor had pulled him into her bed, “put [his] hands onto her breasts and was pressing herself—her buttocks—onto [his] crotch.” He said she was “kissing [his] torso,” groping and kissing him each night for nearly a week. He told her this “was not okay” and reminded her that “you’re my advisor.” She shared emails in which she referred to him as her “sweet cuddly baby” and “cock-er spaniel.” The sexual demands persisted over many months. The student is gay and was unwilling to engage in this kind of unprofessional behavior with his academic supervisor, but felt that he had no real choice because she controlled his future academic prospects.

If the shoe were on the other foot—if an older male professor had made comparable demands and then taken comparable actions against a young female student—every feminist in the world would be demanding his dismissal, or worse.

But this time the shoe was being worn by a radical feminist professor who used her enormous academic power to sexually harass a vulnerable young student.

Now witness the hypocrisy in a letter written to N.Y.U. by a group of scholars and prominent feminists, many who were supporters of the #MeToo movement when the “me” was a woman victim and the harasser a man: “Although we have no access to the confidential dossier, we have all worked for many years in close proximity to Professor Ronell. We have all seen her relationship with students and some of us know the individual who has waged this malicious campaign against her.”

Not content with defending the harasser, they tried to discredit Professor Ronell’s accuser by making the same arguments they condemn when made by male predators against their female accusers: he waited too long to file a complaint; he really asked for it; he deserved his mediocre recommendation because he wasn’t smart enough.

These radical feminists accused the victim of using “a feminist tool to take down a feminist.” They claim that Title IX—which is gender neutral—should be used only to protect “male victims from male perpetrators, or female victims from male perpetrators,” but not male victims from *female* perpetrators. This is reminiscent of African-Americans who argue that only whites can be racists, because we live in a world of white supremacy. The hypocrisy of such double standards should be apparent to all.

In the highly partisan and divided world in which we live, hypocrisy is no longer a sin. All that matters is which side you are on. It reminds me of my grandmother who, when I told her the Brooklyn Dodgers won the World Series, responded, “Yeah, but was that good or bad for the Jews?” Many of today’s grandmothers and their daughters and granddaughters are asking a similar question: “Yeah, but is it good or bad for women?”

While demanding gender equality when it helps a woman, they reject gender equality when it helps a man.

When current Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg—who is the subject of a remarkable documentary, *The Notorious RBG*—was a young lawyer advocating for women’s equality, she frequently used cases in which *men* had been treated unequally. She understood—as many of today’s radical feminists do not understand—that you cannot have gender equality unless men and women are both accorded equal protection of the law.

We need a single standard under which to judge both men and women. To give a predatory female professor a pass is to apply an unconstitutional double standard and to establish a dangerous precedent that could be used to deny protection to all Americans.

So no, there is no place for gender-based affirmative action when it comes to sexual harassment. If the student who claims he was sexually harassed by Professor Ronell is telling the truth—and despite the pressures from radical feminists to whitewash the accusation, N.Y.U. concluded he was sexually harassed—then he was just as much a victim as any woman student in a comparable situation. There must be a single standard for men and women.

Alan M. Dershowitz is the Felix Frankfurter Professor of Law Emeritus at Harvard Law School and author of “The Case Against Impeaching Trump.” Follow him at @AlanDersh





THE PISCES

Our November CyberCutie Sophie Sparks has a thing with mermaids. Whether she wants to be one or just has a water fantasy, we aren't quite sure. What we do know is that she does incredible cam shows dolled up like a gorgeous sea siren. It's no coincidence that this babe is actually a Pisces. Some women were destined to be mermaids.

Photography: Holly Randall
Hair & Makeup: Rosalinda
Styling: Tastemaker 9













SOPHIE SPARKS

Vital Stats:

32B-25-34

19 years old

5'6"

You're pretty fresh to the adult world. What made you want to jump onto that crazy, horny ship?

Indeed, I am brand new! They say if you're good at something, you should never do it for free. I love being sexual and it turns me on to know people enjoy watching me, so it was something I always wanted to try. Now I'm so glad I did, and I can say I've been lucky enough to have only met great people along the way.

You often perform with Hanna Robins. What's your chemistry like?

All the girls I've performed with I'm genuinely attracted to, and therefore we had great chemistry. Aside from content trade, that's one of the advantages of not being tied down to an agency and being able to talk directly to producers and be selective of who I perform with. I realize that means I might be missing out on a lot of jobs, but, to be honest, part of the reason I'm in the industry is to have a good time. So I don't regret being picky.

When do you feel the calmest?

Under the clear night sky, far from loud city life and bright lights. I love watching the stars, looking at constellations, and if I get lucky enough to see a shooting star, I never miss the chance to make a wish.

What do you do to relax after a long, stressful day?

I love cuddling and ice cream. That's a sure recipe to make me feel better. Add watching *The Office* for good measure, and I'll be hunky-dory!

What's with your mermaid obsession?

Busted! I've always enjoyed swimming. I loved how my long hair would flow around me as I swam. I also really like snorkeling and looking at all the different kinds of fish and ocean flora. And I find mermaids, at least their commercialized depiction, to be so pretty with their sparkly scales, colorful tails, and seashell bras. I'm not big into conspiracy theories, but I really do believe some sort of version of mermaids exists.

What's the most important book you've read?

The Little Prince. The words printed on the small, picture-decorated pages tell a story in the simplest of ways, contrasting with its complex meaning. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry creates a faithful yet caricatured version of our world, which I believe everyone should discover. (Seriously, the book takes about two hours to read.) Some of the lessons I found most valuable were that I shouldn't let myself believe that all perceptions are reality, and that there is beauty and value in all of us being unique.

How do you stay sane in this oversaturated world?

I'd be lying if I didn't admit masturbating a lot helps with that. But otherwise, I try to stay informed, keep a balanced position, and do what I can to make the world a better place. ✨

**Find more of Sophie Sparks at
share.myfreecams.com/#Sophie_Sparks
or see more at Penthouse.com**



Our readers' exotic sexcapades brought to life...



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NOTHING DIRTY

BY JENNY NORDBAK

THE first girl I dated after I stopped working at the dungeon thought she was prim and proper. I was a little thrown by it at first, but figured it wouldn't do me any harm to tone down the kink and try some good old-fashioned lesbian sex for once. She swore she was as vanilla as they came, and I think she genuinely believed that, but she didn't seem to realize that she had some hidden kinks. On one of our early dates, I tried to get her to tell me some of her fantasies.

"C'mon, there must be something kinky you're into or curious about," I prompted her. Usually the fact that I had worked as a dominatrix resulted in people confessing shit to me that they'd never told anyone. Sometimes, I learned things I didn't even want to know, but in this case I hoped she would give me something to work with.

"Nothing. I like sex, but nothing *dirty*," she said with a look of distaste.

"Okay...what would you consider dirty?" I asked, sincerely hoping it didn't extend as far as cunnilingus and doggie-style since we hadn't gotten there yet.

"You know..." she hesitated, looking mortified, "like period sex."

I almost laughed, but kept it together. It was supposed to be dudes who were freaked by that.

"I can live with that. So no sex for a few days once a month?"

"I mean, we can do it the other way instead."

"The other way?" I asked, genuinely confused.

"The other *hole*..." she clarified.

This time I really almost laughed aloud. She was totally serious.

"So you don't consider *that* dirty?"

"Not if we do it in the shower," she answered, sounding like it was the most obvious thing in the world. I wasn't going to point out the irony. The idea of fucking her in the ass with my strap-on was incredibly hot.

"I think I need a shower right now," I said playfully, hoping to entice her. Now that she'd brought up fucking her sweet little ass, I was going to need an ice bath to get my lady boner to go back down if she didn't let me do it right now.

"It's not the right time of the month," she said over her shoulder as she led me to the bathroom, "but I suppose I could give you a preview."

I stripped my clothes off on the way there, helping her out of her T-shirt and sweatpants when I caught up with her. I turned the water on, having to figure out how her shower worked since I'd never used it before. She was totally naked by the time I managed to get the hot water going.

Then she basically launched herself at me, lips meeting mine as she pressed her nakedness against me. I was hyperaware of every place our skin touched, loving the feel of her willowy body against my slightly more muscular frame. Everything about her seemed delicate and petite, almost breakable.

We stepped into the tub, letting the hot flow of water cover both of us as we kept kissing. She didn't seem worried about getting her hair wet or the water causing her makeup to run, which I liked. She was caught right there in the moment with me.

She parted her lips and let me kiss her more deeply, probing with my tongue as I did the same with my fingers, spreading her pussy lips

and stroking up and down until I found her clit. She gasped against my mouth, so I knew I'd found just the right spot. I worked it until her breath came in pants and she started to bend her knees at the intensity of it.

I felt her nipples harden against my breasts. They were perfect, hard buds on the tips of her neat little tits. I broke our kiss for a second to enjoy the sight of the water cascading over them before it ran down her flat stomach and onto my hand, which was still rubbing her clit. She saw me looking and arched her back, offering them up.

I was calling bullshit on the good-girl routine—I was pretty sure this girl was an exhibitionist in addition to liking it in the ass. What else was buried in there, waiting for me to coax out of her?

I started to lightly tease her asshole, sliding my fingertip in just a little. She moaned and leaned forward into my chest, giving me open access to her ass. I started mentally kicking myself as I realized I hadn't brought lube or my strap-on into the bathroom.

"I'll be right back. I forgot to grab lube and my dick," I told her, reluctantly pulling away.

"We don't need a dick. Fuck me with your fingers. And just use the shampoo," she said, stopping me and reaching for a bottle on the shelf.

I hesitated, but felt obligated to say, "You're not really supposed to do that. It might have chemicals and it can sting."

She forced the bottle into my hand, looked me in the eye, and said, "It's all-natural. And I like it when it hurts a little."

I had been trying to remember what it was like to be "normal," but at that my inner Mistress kicked into gear and there was no turning those instincts off once they'd started. I turned her around and bent her over, forcing her to lean her arms against the wall.

I poured a generous amount of shampoo onto my fingers and began working it into her tight bud of an asshole. She dropped one hand to stroke her clit, moaning as I slid a second finger in.

If she liked it when it hurt, then she wasn't going to be satisfied with two fingers, so I worked another two in, spanking her lightly when she started to whine. When I struck her slick ass cheek with my palm, she went into a frenzy, arching her back and thrusting her ass against me, as her fingers on her clit sped up to a frantic pace. I didn't think she had ever been spanked, and it seemed like she'd just been waiting for someone to do it.

I rained medium blows down on her gorgeous derriere as I thrust my fingers harder and faster into her asshole. I paused my spanking only to pour some more shampoo, knowing that this time it *would* sting.

Sure enough, she hissed at the pain, and tried to move away from me when she first felt it, but then lost herself to the blissful mix of pleasure and pain. I kept fucking and spanking her until she came, her ass clenching even tighter around my fingers.

She turned and kissed me, and then we washed each other without talking. The giant smile on her face said enough. I had gone into this relationship trying not to automatically dominate her, but if it's what she was secretly into, who was I to argue?

Jenny Nordbak is a retired dominatrix and author of "The Scarlett Letters: My Secret Year of Men in an L.A. Dungeon."



**"I WAS CALLING BULLSHIT ON THE GOOD-GIRL
ROUTINE—I WAS PRETTY SURE THIS GIRL WAS AN
EXHIBITIONIST IN ADDITION TO LIKING IT IN THE ASS.
WHAT ELSE WAS BURIED IN THERE, WAITING
FOR ME TO COAX OUT OF HER?"**

THE MAGICAL AND CALMING EFFECTS OF CBD



EVEN if you're not a cannabis fanatic, chances are you've heard of the magical cannabinoid CBD. Unlike THC, CBD has no psychoactive effects but works as a natural pain reliever, as well as a treatment for anxiety, inflammation, and insomnia. CBD also boosts energy, helps you relax, and clears the head.

As the cannabis industry grows into an increasingly legitimate economic sector, more and more products pop up every day. (Shit, even Coca-Cola is getting in on the game.) Five years ago, you would have been all "CBD who?", but now that this wonder drug can be sold online, you can get incredible CBD products from all over. Here are a few to get you started.

1



2



1. STRÄVA CRAFT COFFEE “ELEVATE” HEMP OIL-INFUSED COFFEE \$55

This seems like a crazy high price to pay for a bag of beans, but it's worth it. Better than a cup of bulletproof coffee, Sträva coffee restores balance and alleviates inflammation and pain, while making you feel alert, calm, and focused. The coffee itself has delicious notes of brown sugar, cherry, and natural cocoa, and is infused with organic hemp oil sourced from respected growers in Europe and Colorado. Hemp oil is naturally rich in phytocannabinoids, including CBD, which balances out the caffeine in the coffee. Good stuff. stravacraftcoffee.com

2. BLUEBIRD BOTANICALS HEMP COMPLETE \$30

A few drops of this magic sauce into your morning drink and you'll be as zen as a monk. What's great about Bluebird Botanical's Hemp Complete is that this olive oil-based liquid will work with just about anything you drink or cook, and contains steam-distilled hemp extract, plus 26 aromatic hemp terpenes as well as aldehydes and ketones. This might sound like science crack-talk, but terpenes are the magic kick-in-the-ass CBD needs. You'll feel calmer and sharper almost immediately. There are so many ways to ingest these drops, so feel free to get creative. bluebirdbotanicals.com

3. OLEO INSTANT COCONUT WATER \$39

Oleo's coconut water mix is made from freeze-dried coconut and is naturally loaded with electrolytes, vitamins, and minerals. Each serving is infused with 25mgs of CBD. Typical CBD products are not water-soluble, and take around an hour to start metabolizing. But Oleo created a micro-encapsulated, water-soluble CBD with a particle size of less than 10 microns so that you feel the effects of the CBD almost immediately. Oleo's mix also comes in Rooibos Tea flavor and flavorless. This shit seriously works. We know from experience. oleolife.com

3



THE GREAT MELLOWING

OUR NEW AGE OF PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES DOING YOGA, MEDITATING, AND SCARFING KALE.

BY PHIL HANRAHAN

ONE of the things I did while writing a book on the 2008 Green Bay Packers was research earlier versions of the franchise under championship coaches Curly Lambeau and Vince Lombardi. Along with looking for nuggets about leatherhead-era players and Lombardi dominance, I brushed up on vintage training-camp protocols and fitness regimens.

With images of buzz-cut linebackers swinging Indian clubs and smoking postgame cigarettes in mind, I searched for stories that might bring the book humor and color—two qualities whose value rose when that 2008 team kept losing close games.

With Aaron Rodgers in his first season as starting QB, the Pack went 6-10, losing seven contests by four points or fewer. They played a bunch of nail-biters, and lost every one. To keep my book from being a big Cheesehead bummer, I was desperate for tales of old that could bring a little comic relief to my chronicle, even if I had to go 80 years back in time for the goods.

Lambeau wouldn't let his players use ketchup—that was one thing I gleaned. And then there was the year he bused his players to northern Wisconsin for preseason training and it got so cold it snowed. After that experiment, he created Rockwood Lodge, a facility where players could live and practice, located just outside Green Bay. He strictly controlled their diets (no fried food), and put unmarried players in barrack-style quarters, eight to a room.

Aside from the French fry ban, life at Rockwood wasn't bad. Except for the ground the players ran around on during practice. The thin topsoil sat atop a shelf of granite. It beat the hell out of their legs. "Shin Splint Field," the players called it.

As for Lombardi, his draconian rules (no water during practice, for example), meant to instill discipline and toughness, led to lots of pitch-black player jokes. Training camps were so brutal, some participants just quit. It was a common enough occurrence that players even had a term for this phenomenon. If a 1960s Packer said, "I can't take this, I might domino," that meant they were ready to flee, like a regiment-deserting soldier.

"We never had anybody die during grass drills," deadpanned 2018 Hall of Fame inductee Jerry Kramer in his masterful 1968 book *Instant Replay*, cowritten with Dick Schaap. But Kramer

goes on to tell us of a rookie who began hallucinating after a marathon series of August "up-downs," a grueling, burpee-like exercise where players would run in place for 30 seconds, knees pistoning high, then hit the ground and spring back up.

"It's impossible to put into words how horrible I feel," Kramer wrote after executing 80 up-downs in sweltering heat, a journal entry that was incorporated into his vivid season account.

Training is different these days. In football, basketball, everywhere. Hydration levels are closely monitored. Teams employ nutritionists, kinesiologists, sleep-science experts. Numerous professional athletes, including Rodgers, LeBron James, and Blake Griffin, do yoga. Others sleep in hyperbaric chambers, aiming to increase red blood-cell production.

The king of this new age? Gisele Bündchen's husband, 41-year-old New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady. He not only pretzels himself on a yoga mat, meditates, and eats avocado ice cream (thereby avoiding dairy), he also hits the hay in "athlete recovery sleepwear," is a vegan in summer, and employs a neuropsychologist to oversee a custom cognitive protocol meant to goose his brain-processing speed.

It's tempting to titter. (Have you seen Gisele's recent Instagram photo of the power couple engaged in what's called acro yoga—a blend of yoga and acrobatics?). As someone who's never owned a yoga mat, I feel this temptation. But then I face facts. Tom Brady has been insanely good for 18-plus seasons. He played lights-out as a 40-year-old. In certain Patriot team testing, he's gotten faster and stronger as he's aged. He could very well become the first quarterback in NFL history to win a Super Bowl in his forties.

If kale smoothies give him an edge, he should keep glugging.

Furthermore, it would be uncouth of me, in the "Just Chill" issue, to let my child-of-the-seventies bias (I came of age when only women did yoga, and wore leotards) push me toward jesting about outside linebackers doing tree poses, and power forwards arching into downward dogs. In fact, it's time I give this new-school training a closer look. It's time I walk into the light. (Just don't make me eat avocado ice cream.)



YOGA

“Muscle pliability”—that’s Brady’s phrase for yoga’s greatest benefit for athletes. As he explained to *GQ* in 2016, strength training and the explosive movements required in football and basketball make muscles dense and shorter. But in sports, the body will perform even better if muscles are longer and are trained to do more than contract.

As Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Calvin “Megatron” Johnson, and former Tennessee Titans running back and Heisman winner Eddie George will attest, yoga also helps with balance, breathing, endurance, core strength, spinal flexibility, and the performance of your proprioceptor sensors. These latter convey data about muscle tension, joint angle, and muscle length, helping guide and stabilize the moving body. Kareem says once he started doing yoga, he never had a muscle injury. Kevin Love says it makes him lighter on his feet. Eddie George cites yoga’s role in physical recovery, and says all the twisting and bending helped him handle the extreme torque his body endured during games, by teaching him to “go with the flow rather than resist” the awkward positional physics. The Giants, Eagles, Bengals, Seahawks, Cowboys, Chargers, Saints, and Bears have all integrated yoga into their programs. Teams employ top yoga instructors for both in-season and off-season guidance.

MEDITATION

It’s easy to make a case for ballers getting their zen on. Consider how much of elite athletic performance is mental, with calm under pressure, and the ability to focus and block out excessive and negative thinking, helping separate the good from the great.

Michael Jordan, LeBron James, Kobe Bryant, and Derek Jeter—four players known for crunch-time excellence, and all familiar with meditation’s benefits. Coach Phil Jackson brought

the Eastern practice to Jordan and Kobe. “You’re a frog on a lily pad,” Jackson would say when leading the Lakers in meditation. The former Yankees shortstop Jeter once claimed he used to meditate for an hour on off-days. During the 2012 Eastern Conference final, a TV camera caught LeBron meditating, eyes closed, during a timeout late in Game 7. His team, the Heat, went on to win, defeating the Celtics. Of course there are 42 other reasons LeBron is so exceptional on the court, but meditation’s part of his arsenal.

SLEEP SCIENCE

Would it surprise you to hear Tom Brady practices excellent sleep hygiene? (The term refers to habits that promote better sleep.) He gets to bed no later than 9 P.M., shuns caffeine and alcohol, and “de-stimulates” his brain with proven cognitive methods after nightfall. Multiple NFL teams now work with sleep scientists to make sure their players are getting the benefits of enough, quality sleep. It makes sense, given how important reaction time, mental sharpness, tissue healing, and learning/memory are in the game they play.

Wearable measurement tech, light-beam devices to adjust circadian rhythms, special glasses—it truly is a science these days, with space-age gadgets joining the clinical and lab-tested knowledge. A 2011 Stanford Sleep Clinic experiment with Stanford basketball players discovered that ten hours of nightly slumber led to faster sprinting, quicker reactions, and improved shooting, including at the free-throw line. More sleep leads to higher HGH levels, good for muscle strength and healing. Less sleep means less testosterone.

“Fatigue makes cowards of us all!” curfew-loving Vince Lombardi used to bellow. He might have been a dinosaur when it came to hydration, but his sleep-hygiene instincts were sound. 

SAVAGE WORLD

**DAN SAVAGE, AMERICA'S MOST
INTERESTING SEX DEVIANT.**

INTERVIEW BY ALEXANDER BISLEY

DESCRIBED as “a deviant of the highest order” by *The Daily Caller*, and “the most interesting man in the world” by Katie Couric, Seattle’s Dan Savage has been at the forefront of sexual freedom and sex positivity for two decades.

Fifty-four-year-old Savage is a lively sex and relationship-advice columnist, activist, and political commentator. The creator of the Hump! Film Festival, currently touring the country, and the It Gets Better project (with his husband Terry Miller), Savage is best known for his longstanding America-wide syndicated column “Savage Love” and his world-famous podcast Savage Lovecast.

Every day, Savage’s readers and listeners ask for advice on everything under the sexual sun. Whether it’s a med student wondering if she should tell the doctor she’s dating about the sex work that funds her studies, a woman hoping to experience orgasms and feel less shame during group sex with her fiancé, or a husband navigating a newly open marriage, Savage gets it all. In answer to the age-old question, *How much sex is too much sex?*, he quotes Mary Poppins: “Enough is as good as a feast.” Some of the questions he gets are poignant, like those from depressed virgins in their late twenties or older, and his responses are heartfelt and empathetic.

An advocate of informed consent and an outspoken opponent of Donald Trump and Mike Pence, Savage has a new project underway, #ITMFA, or Impeach the Motherfucker Already, which raises money for the ACLU, Planned Parenthood, and the International Refugee Assistance Project.

Over the course of two phone calls from his office at Seattle alternative newspaper *The Stranger*, where he serves as editorial director, Savage engages in a witty, candid conversation about sex, monogamy, #MeToo, ethical porn, and the political left’s problems.

Ever get hit with a sex question at an inappropriate moment?

I was standing in line in the Chicago airport at seven in the morning, to get a sandwich for a long flight, with my son, who was seven at the time. A fan tapped me on the shoulder. I turned around, and

Pages 104-106: Dan Savage at Mindvalley’s “Love and Relationships” livecast, Ibiza, Spain, 2017.



PHOTO BY ROMAN ROBINSON





PHOTO BY ROMAN ROBINSON

got a question about rimming. I said, "I don't want to talk about rimming at 7 A.M., even if I was alone, which I'm not. I'm here with my seven-year-old and we haven't covered rimming yet, or, for that matter, where babies come from."

Sometimes the sight of me causes people to disinhibit around having a sexual conversation, because they've been reading my column forever and listening to my podcast and those are all very sexual conversations. So they see me, and they're intrigued to tell me things. In person I'm very shy, and I prefer to be told things at the remove of an email account or a phone-message inbox as opposed to face-to-face at an airport.

Is monogamy an impossible standard?

Indeed, I think it is. I don't think it's a fool's errand, though. There are people out there who want to be in monogamous relationships and that's the model that works for them and I would encourage them to seek that. I encourage people who want to be monogamous to have a more complicated and nuanced understanding of monogamy. That you're still gonna want to fuck other people and so is your partner, so don't police each other for evidence of what you should just accept to be true. If you see your partner checking out the barista at the coffee shop, and they're not being too inconsiderate about it, making the barista feel uncomfortable, and they're not doing it so flagrantly obviously that they're making you feel undervalued, give them a pass.

Of course they want to fuck other people, but they've made a monogamous commitment. The question is, *are* they fucking other people? If the answer is no, then they're pretty good at monogamy, even if they do desire others. If you're with somebody 50 or 60 years, and they cheated on you once, then you're really good at monogamy. Monogamy is the only thing humans do where perfection is considered the only standard of success. This creates a lot of grief. You can be Shaun White, the world's greatest snowboarder, and wipe out, get up, and still be Shaun White, world's greatest snowboarder. But when it comes to monogamy, you can be monogamous for 40 years, get a handjob from a masseuse, and then it's like, oh, you were terrible at monogamy always, and were never in love. That's what the culture will tell you. That's an unrealistic expectation around monogamy and what it means. Humans are fallible! This isn't me arguing that monogamous people should be non-monogamous. This is me trying to talk monogamous people into a better understanding of their monogamy that will make their relationships more stable and successful.

As a corollary, you call the idea of "the one"—the perfect person—a destructive myth, arguing a 6.4 is the best you can hope for in a partner.

I noticed this myth in action the very first month I started writing an advice column, 27 years ago. People would write in and talk about their lover or the person they were with, their partner, their boyfriend, or even their husband or wife, who was so great in so many ways, but they just worried the person wasn't "the one"!

Like there's this other person out there, this perfect fit, and if you chose someone who is great but not perfect for you, you were cheating yourself out of a chance to be with "the one," this flawlessly compatible creature you've heard about all your life. In reality, there

is no such thing as "the one." There is no perfect fit. There is no frictionless relationship. No one can be all things to another person sexually, romantically, intimately, emotionally. We expect too much from our relationships and then we're disappointed in them.

In our increasingly secular Western societies, is sex God?

I don't know if I've ever described sex as God. I don't think God is God and it's not my desire to create a different golden calf to replace that golden calf. I think sex is awesome, and sex is powerful. Human societies make the mistake of believing that we are in charge of sex. When actually sex is in charge of us. We're told when we are kids that one day we will grow up and have sex. And the reality is, one day we grew up and sex has us. Through natural selection and spontaneous mutation, sex created us, and sex and evolution are creating whatever is going to come after us. We pretend that we're in charge of it, and we're not.

Sarah Silverman once told me that semen was the weirdest thing she'd ever eaten. Does semen really have antidepressant properties?

It's anecdotal, not data, but semen works for me.

What the hell's with sex-doll brothels?

[Laughs] If some people want to fuck a toaster with a Fleshlight duct-taped to it, I don't have a problem with that.

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ACTUALLY SEX IS IN
CHARGE OF US."**

I'll never forget your one-liner: "But what if kink-shaming is my kink?"

[Laughs] Well, I'm sure it is someone's.

What's your Hump! Film Festival all about?

What you'll find with Hump! is very humanizing porn. These are short films, five minutes or less, made by friends and lovers. No one is performing for a paycheck. I have friends who do commercial porn. But this is different.

Hump!'s porn is really specific and idiosyncratic. It's an evening of porn shorts that we chose for people to watch together as an audience. If you were sitting at home alone in front of your computer, you wouldn't click on these types of shorts.

At first when someone comes to Hump!, they're noticing what's not theirs, sexually. Not my sexual orientation, not my kinks, not my gender expression that I prefer. Then about halfway through the screening, everyone's laughing, everyone's clapping, no one's covering their eyes anymore. Under that thin veneer of sexual orientation or gender identity or sexual interests—under that thin veneer is a big slab of everything-looks-the-same. Desire, vulnerability, the sense of humor, passion, all of that, all of those feelings are the same! It's kind of magic.

You contend that ethical porn, and feminist porn, is more about the way it's made and consumed—fair labor rights, for example—rather than the content?

Fair labor rights, people paying, it being produced in a consensual way where the performers are empowered and in control. Some people look at feminist porn and think you can never show any sort of power play, that feminist porn can't be BDSM, and that's completely not true. It can be. Vanilla porn can be made in an anti-feminist way that is exploitative or dangerous, or traumatizing. So you can't just look at what's being done in the porn you're

watching. It's about how it was produced and who it was produced by and how the performers were treated during its production.

What's been one great thing to come out of #MeToo and #TimesUp?

I'm hoping it's going to make the world a safer place going forward. I really hope it's opening men's eyes to something we talk about pretty frequently on the Savage Lovecast, which are the different ways men and women are socialized. Sometimes straight men, even gay men, are unable to project themselves into a woman's experience. Women live every day with the fear and the threat of sexual harassment or sexual violence in a way that men don't. Men need to interact with women in a sexual way that's healthy and not going to leave her feeling threatened or traumatized.

Bill Cosby went to prison today, that was good to see. I hope Harvey Weinstein goes to prison shortly.

Queer writer Masha Gessen has criticized aspects of #MeToo and #TimesUp. What's your response?

I read her piece about fear of a sex panic—how when something becomes a moral panic in a society, it often sweeps up people who it was ostensibly trying to protect. Look at sex offender registries, which were created to protect children. And now we have children winding up on these registries. I think that a smart critique of any social justice movement is important, so the benefits coming from it are not tarnished, so the movement doesn't go down in flames, and the change you wanted to see not made. Historically, the LGBT and civil rights movements have always had a lot of internal criticism about tactics and rhetoric and goals. And I think any social movement has to be open to criticism about these tactics, rhetoric, and goals, including #MeToo.

What are your thoughts on Asia Argento?

Oh my God. I don't really have any comment on Asia Argento. I'm agape at the whole situation.

How do you feel about the Trump-Pence administration's attitude toward sex?

They are going to fuck everything up. Anything they can get their hands on. Trump has appointed people to the Department of Health and Human Services who are opponents of legal birth control, which is fucking ridiculous.

They want people to have children when they're not prepared to have them, not ready to take care of them. They want disease and disaster to spread through people's lives if they make the choice to be sexually active because they fear sex and they hate sex and they don't want people having it or doing it. They want sex to be as potentially disastrous as possible in all circumstances, which is why they oppose abortion rights and birth control and sex education and the HPV vaccine. When you look at everything they oppose on the sexual front, they're opposed to anything that makes sex less risky, less dangerous, and less disruptive.

There's a Republican empathy gap. When someone else's son was gay and came out and wanted to marry a person that he loved and wanted the protection of marriage and not to be vulnerable in the way that couples who can never marry are often vulnerable, Senator Rob Portman was like, *Fuck you! Fuck your fag kid!* But then his kid comes out and suddenly he can see the importance

of it. That's always the case with Republicans. Megyn Kelly, who used to be at Fox News, supports paid maternal leave because she had a kid. Nancy Reagan supported stem-cell research because her husband had Alzheimer's. We need Republicans who can imagine what it might be like to be trans and have to go into [a public] bathroom.

Ted Cruz's trans-predator ad was the most disgusting ad I saw in 2016.

Yeah, I completely agree. This is all so depressing.

Are evangelicals like Pence and Franklin Graham frauds, men who don't care about credible allegations of sexual assault?

This is nothing new with the religious right. They couldn't give two shits about victims of sexual assault. It's only a shock if you weren't paying attention over the last 40 years.

Mike Pence is also a fucking idiot. This leaves out New Zealand, but I always say that the problem with the United States is that Australia got the convicts and Canada got the French and we got the Puritans. And we're still reeling from that lousy bargain.

In terms of the political left, what's a criticism you might have?

There is a strain of the left that is really invested in show trials and purity testing and virtue signaling. And would rather lose surrounded by perfect allies than win with an army that includes imperfect allies. And it is self-defeating and it is exhausting and it is a real problem for the left. Because people feel if they say the wrong thing without malice in a meeting or on a message board that they will be savaged or attacked on Twitter endlessly, or tagged as a racist or a transphobe or a neoliberal for the rest of their lives. And that makes people not want to open their mouths, not want to participate.

"THERE IS A STRAIN OF THE LEFT THAT IS REALLY INVESTED IN SHOW TRIALS AND PURITY TESTING AND VIRTUE SIGNALING. AND WOULD RATHER LOSE SURROUNDED BY PERFECT ALLIES THAN WIN WITH AN ARMY THAT INCLUDES IMPERFECT ALLIES."

Have 2016's leftist purists learned their lessons?

Some have, but there will be plenty of idiots next time around. People making the same arguments. Jill Stein and idiots like her. Hopefully they'll be fewer of them—hopefully the intervening years have sobered enough of them the fuck up, that they'll be less damaging for us. But there will always still be idiots.

Last time I wrote about you, a few people got upset about it online; one of them responded, "Dan Savage is a CIS douchenozzle."

[Laughs] People are entitled to their opinions, including their low opinions of me. Often when people from the left are criticizing me it is about something I wrote or said a dozen years ago, 15 years ago, 20 years ago. I've continued to write and my position on many things has evolved. Particularly as we've gotten more information about asexuality, for instance—I still get criticized for my initial reaction to that. It's kind of disingenuous. A lot of what goes on on Twitter is people screaming, "Fuck you, listen to us, do better!" And then you listen and you do better, and those same people are still screaming, "Fuck you!"

Anything else to say to your haters?

Sometimes somebody is mad at you and they have a point and you

Savage at the Hump! Film Festival



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAN SAVAGE

have to listen. It can be a temptation when you're in a position like mine to dismiss everyone who's got a beef with you, a hater, and not listen. But sometimes you're wrong. Sometimes somebody else is right and you'll be a better and smarter writer, and commenter, and thinker, and human being, and citizen, and voter. And you listen to this person who is yelling at you. But you have to be able to separate malicious-fucking-shitbag-troll-haters from somebody who has a legit point and a legit beef. And that takes some time and effort, because you have to pick the legit-beef people out of the same pile.

But what I would say to my haters? Fuck off. [Laughs] Yeah, fuck off, and I hope you enjoy your lives, because I'm enjoying mine despite your hate!

Will technology and artificial intelligence render someone like you redundant some day?

Will the future have robots writing advice columns? I certainly hope not, I have a mortgage. Humans are a mass of contradictions. Sometimes I give seemingly contradictory advice. I think that aspect of the human touch, including the hypocrisy that comes with it—that touch can't be replicated by a robot. So I will still have a role, even if it's only for complicating and blurring and infuriating.

Who's a sex-positive contemporary inspiring you in 2018?

I'm such a fan of Meredith Chivers. Justin Lehmler is a terrific writer. David Ley is a terrific writer and thinker on sexual issues, sexual addiction, or the bullshit that is the concept of sex addiction and porn addiction. I never get tired of these three.

Did you watch *This Is America*?

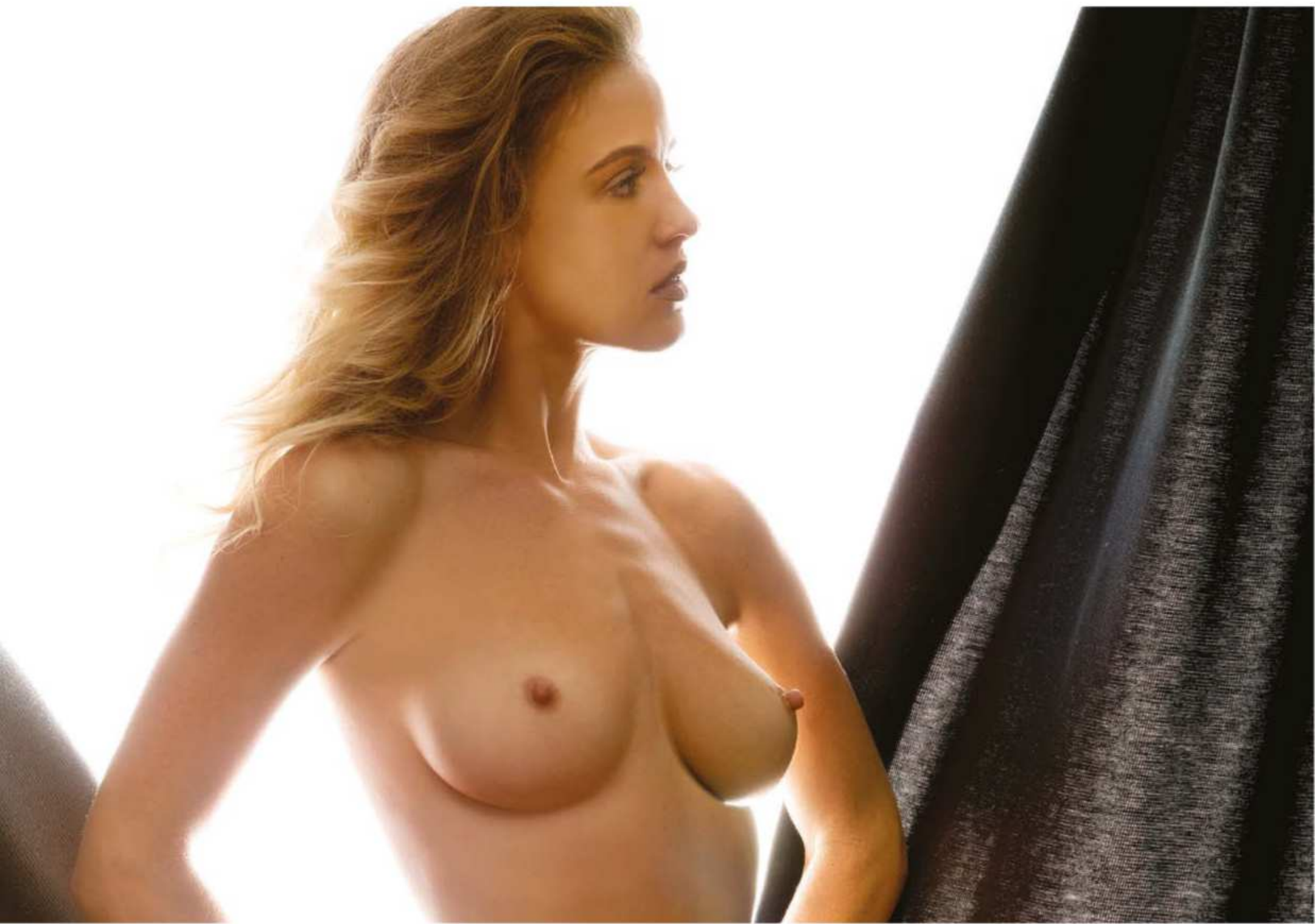
I tried to watch Sacha Baron Cohen's new show, but it just made me so tense. Seeing him pick the wings off a fly like that, even when the fly is Roy Moore who fucking deserves it. It just makes me unbearably tense. I already smoke enough pot and don't need anything that makes me smoke more.

Want to mention anything else you hope people take away from your work?

We've talked about my critics from the left. I get critics from the religious right and I'm always telling religious people who have a problem with my columns that if you boiled them all down to their essence, what you're left with is, "Do unto others as you'd have them do unto you." The Golden Rule. It's just that in my universe there's more that can be done under a person than in their universe.

My column and podcast are encouraging people to communicate and encouraging people to be kind and decent to each other. Period, the end. Sometimes being kind and decent to someone means flogging them, because that's what they love, and if you like it, too, then you're creating more joy and happiness in the world by beating the shit out of someone who wants to have the shit beat out of them. Go for it. 

Alexander Bisley is a writer whose previous interview subjects have included Anthony Bourdain, Andrew O'Hagan, Rashida Jones, Rose Byrne, and John Kerry. Follow him @alexanderbisley



CURTAIN CALL

Photography: Steve Coleman

BORN and raised in Sydney, Australia, Jordan Finlayson shot to fame after winning season three of reality dating show *Beauty and the Geek*. Since then, she's become the Aussie-market face of Makita power tools and Ugg boots. Now when is she going to get herself over here to America? We'll wait.

Follow Jordan on Instagram @Jordan_Finlayson





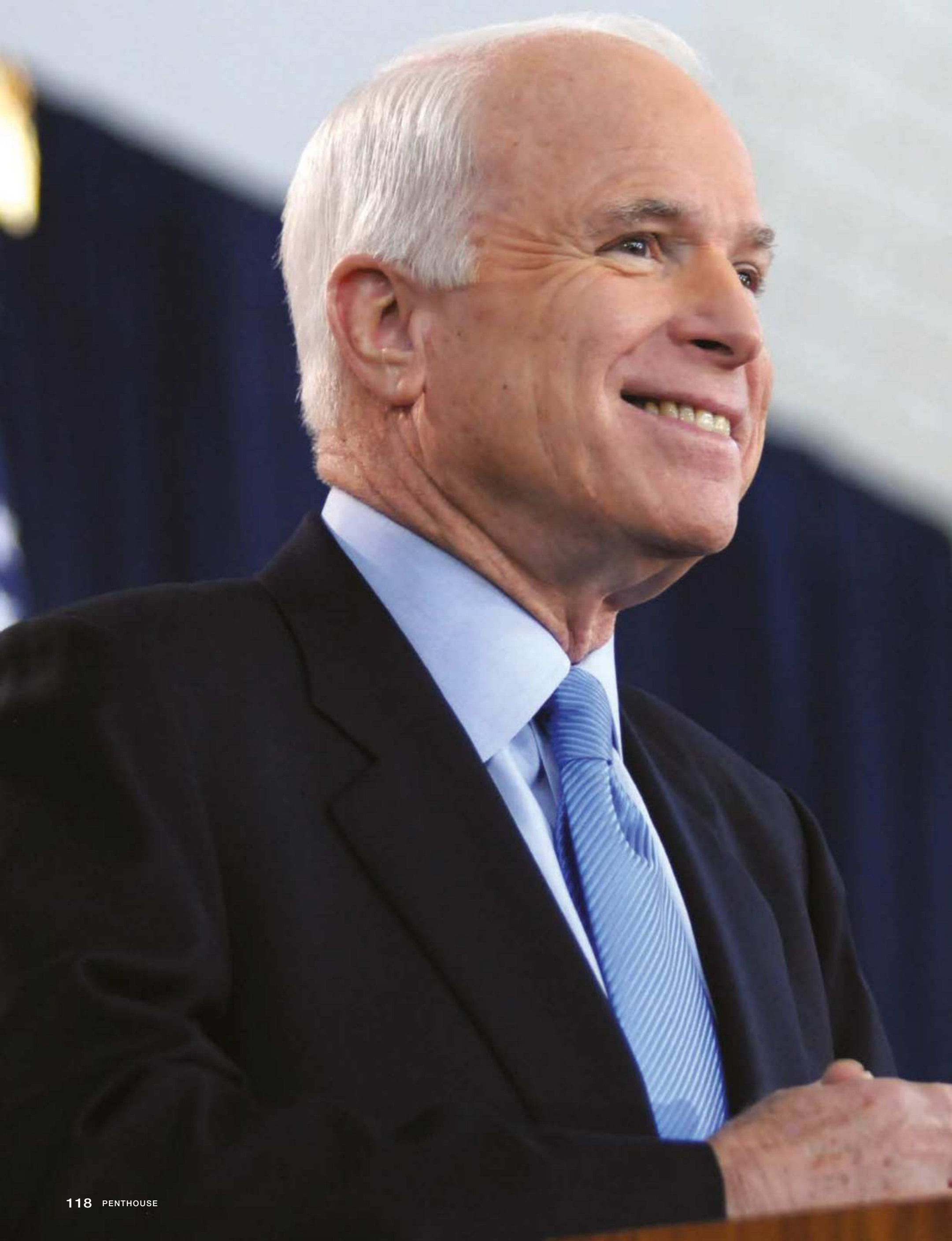












SAYING GOODBYE

TAKING STOCK OF JOHN MCCAIN.

BY MATT GALLAGHER

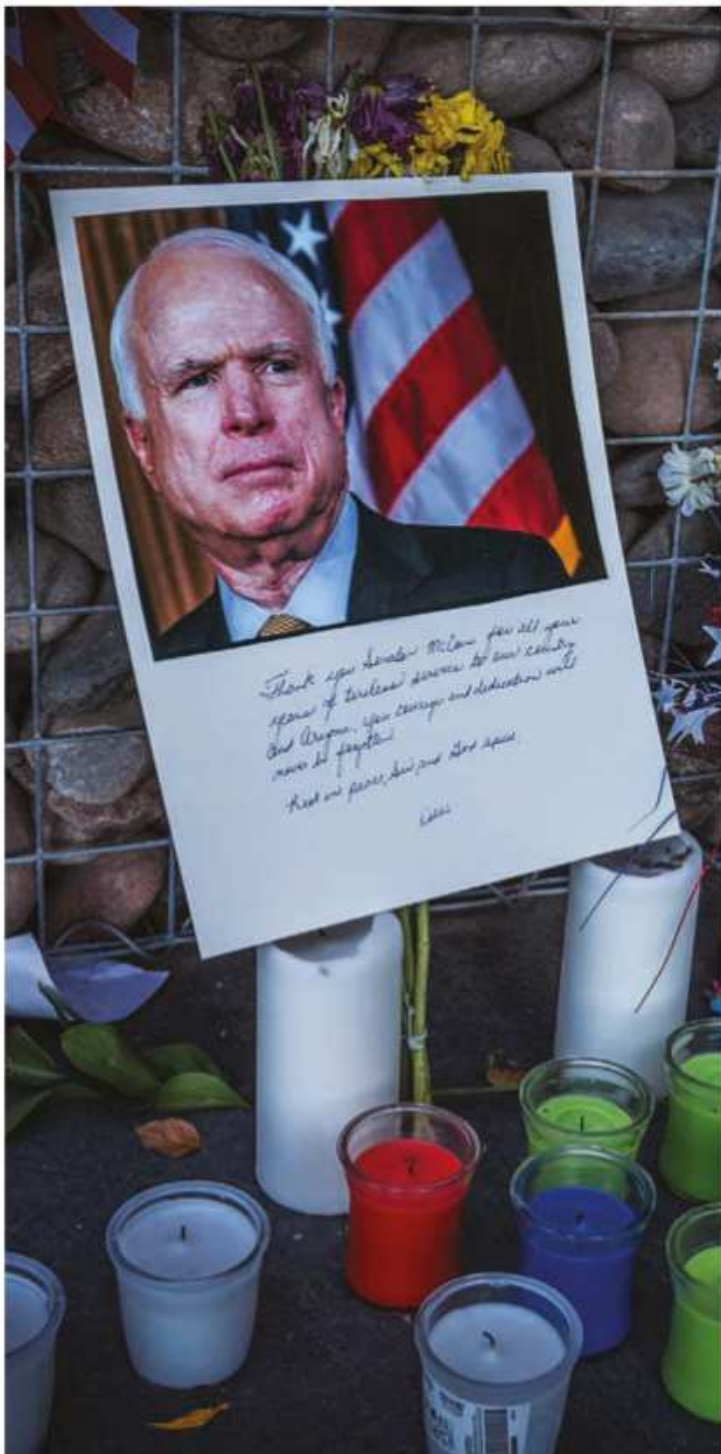


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / MAP BY DOUG JAMES



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM / MAP BY GREG PATTON

BY the time you read this, the legacy of John McCain will have been parsed into a billion little pieces. Links to glowing tributes and angry contrarian political screeds alike will have jammed Twitter feeds and Google search results, with ancient magazine profiles and essays mined for quips and lessons from yesteryear. He was a man of multitudes—even the angriest screeder would have to grant him that—and subsequently a multitude of takes and views on his life follow with the news of his death.

This is mine.

What's interesting about McCain as a war hero is that his story comes from such an untraditional place. From Alvin York to the Tuskegee Airmen to Chris Kyle, the mythos of the American War Hero usually originates with a singular act of great courage in the midst of chaos, something that'll read well on a Medal of Honor citation and hold court in barrooms for decades to come. These bursts of physical bravery are studied at military schools and command colleges, one man rallying others into overcoming their psychological fears and survival instincts, turning a battle through sheer will. These stories happen, these stories matter, these stories endure because human beings are storytelling creatures and armies need heroes to inspire the next generation.

McCain's heroism, though, is more rooted in moral grounding, and begins with failure. A missile shot down his A-4E Skyhawk jet in October 1967, and he ejected from it to live. He parachuted into a lake, breaking a few bones in the process, only to be pulled from the water by a North Vietnamese mob and sent off to the infamous Hoa Lo Prison, better remembered today as the "Hanoi Hilton." He was an American prisoner of war like thousands of others. He was a naval officer, a graduate of Annapolis, which made him different than most POWs but nothing too exceptional.

He was also the son of an admiral—an admiral who commanded the Pacific fleet of the United States Navy. For his Vietnamese captors, that was indeed exceptional.

Anyone with a pulse in 2018 knows what happened next: five-and-a-half years of confinement and torture. A refusal to accept an early release offered by his captors because he was an admiral's son. Learning poems like Robert W. Service's "The Cremation of Sam McGee" through wall-tapping to keep his mind active with other POWs. Signing a false confession, because of course he did that; he was being tortured and was willing to do anything to make it stop, because all human beings have their breaking points. His admitting to that false confession



Memorial service of U.S. Senator John McCain at National Cathedral in Washington, USA on September 1, 2018

MUCH AGAINST HIS OWN SELF-INTEREST, MCCAIN PUSHED FOR CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM YEARS BEFORE CITIZENS UNITED. THE FAMOUS THUMBS-DOWN LAST YEAR TO THE OBAMACARE REPEAL WILL BE AN IMAGE THAT LASTS FOR GENERATIONS.

after being released gave all those other POWs the latitude to do the same, if they so choose. With latitude, maybe, could come forgiveness and reckoning.

This is not a hagiography. McCain the politician disappointed me and failed the moderate litmus test more times than I can remember. His stances on health care and his hawkish interventionism were ones I personally have a hard time reconciling with. He treated his first wife terribly after coming back from Vietnam. His daughter says stupid things on TV a lot and he's got to be at least partially to blame for that. I fell for the whole Maverick "Straight Talk Express" schtick in 2000 as a high school senior and spent much of the remaining decade watching in horror as he behaved like every other Republican in the Senate, minus a feel-good speech or two every year about the importance of bipartisanship.

But. But! BUT. Here's what those damn screeders don't understand, or refuse to, because anger is currency in certain corners of our squawking times. He was a Republican. Of course he was going to vote as one. Yes, I personally wish he'd been the moderate voice of reason more often than he actually was, at least as often as the national media cultivated him to be. But to pretend he wasn't ever one is both disingenuous and deeply fucking stupid. Much against his own self-interest, he pushed for campaign finance reform years before Citizens United. The famous thumbs-down last year to the Obamacare repeal will be an image that lasts for generations. (I recommend watching the spliced version set alongside Jim Ross of professional wrestling fame calling the drama.) And, of course, he almost single-handedly held back Congress from authorizing torture during the Bush-Cheney years. Personal testimony's a hell of a force. McCain was right to use his then.

That he passes away during the Age of Trump carries a dark, heavy irony. Three Baby Boomer presidents now, none of them Vietnam veterans, a rarity in the history of American politics and the presidency. Yet: So what? If you were reading a book about our republic a hundred years from now, which man would you care about? Which man's life belongs in the annals?

Give me McCain, every time.

With regards to his hawkishness—what other pro-Iraq War senator let their son go fight in that war? (Answer: Very few.) If nothing else, McCain clearly believed in American power and might, and in using those things to spread our democratic ideals. I've come to wonder if a lot of McCain's patriotic-speak about honor, duty, and country fell flat with his detractors because they disagreed with the concepts fundamentally. Which is a beautifully American thing to do, in and of itself.

The sanitized version of McCain would've embraced that pushback. The real version of him probably would've cursed them out like only an old sailor could. I like that duality. It means the old lion was complicated. Yeah, some of it was bullshit. But enough of it was genuine—from his superb memoir *Faith of My Fathers*, to his cosponsoring a comprehensive immigration bill with Ted Kennedy in 2005 as proof and tribute to old American bipartisanship, to the many stories of him, well into his seventies and eighties, visiting troops in combat zones. Because that's what real deals do. They live what they pronounce.

Fair winds and following seas, Senator. Thank you for your moral courage and example. 

Matt Gallagher is a U.S. Army veteran of Iraq and the author of the novel "Youngblood" (Atria/Simon & Schuster).

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SENSITIVITY OVERLOAD

ONE GUY'S ARGUMENTS AGAINST WHAT WE WERE TAUGHT TO BELIEVE

BY JOE DEROSA

TODAY feels unique to me. Something inside me stirs, maybe even sings, as I bang away on my keyboard. Dare I say it? I feel...happy.

I'm sitting at a café table in New York City, with distractingly beautiful women, painfully hip men, and others belonging to a dozen different demographics and origins, all marching by with apparent purpose and poise. Normally, I write in darkness—away from humanity. But today I arrived in this somewhat strange place—I lived here for a decade, but my five years away might as well be forever—wanting to do that thing New York inspires you to do: something different.

And, I must say, it's working. Not only is this the first time I've ever actually felt like a writer—Manhattan, glass of wine, people-watching; I mean, c'mon—it's also the most appropriate setting I could ever imagine for tackling the topic of sensitivity. No, I didn't plan this. It all just came together, the same way this kinetic metropolis somehow works day in, day out, despite its countless moving, often contradictory parts.

New York, New York—where sensitivity is simultaneously alive and thriving, and gutted in the garbage with a bullet in its brain. It's a cultural playground, where each monkey-bars-bound individual must learn to love and hate, trust and question, indulge and abstain.

This is the kind of town where, in front of a church, you could be knocked to the street by a priest rushing inside, only to have this same priest take your confession minutes later. What I'm trying to say is it's a dynamic, seesaw environment. The first lesson to learn when living in New York is how to push and also how to handle getting pushed back. There's no solace for gentle, bleeding hearts or bullies. Both types may be able to function day to day, but can't enjoy the Big Apple's full potential.

Why am I so intent on pursuing this train of thought? I suppose it's because I now rarely encounter this level of daily human compromise. For Christ's sake, I live in Hollywood. La La Land. The worst place on planet Earth, occupied by the worst people from all over. It's a lightning rod for those eager to trade ethics for economic status and integrity for auditions. But Hollywood's greatest sickness

is a plague of unified opinion. Everyone—and I mean everyone—champions the same causes and condemns the same social catastrophes. Nuance, debate, and in-depth discussion are nowhere to be found. Everything is cut and dry. That's how you keep your head above water... by not even getting wet in the first place. For a city so singularly minded, you can't help but think it's constantly eating its own tail. You wanna know how awful the people in Hollywood truly are? They make the people of New York seem tolerable! Look at the way I'm fawning over this place! You can tell I'm starved for even the tiniest dollop of diverse conviction.

Groupthink—there's nothing I despise more. Well, except for *How I Met Your Mother*. Goddamn, I hate that show. But come to think of it, the primary reason I can't stand the program is the groupthink of its laughing, applauding audience: all these people, identically responding to a situation, and I don't buy it for a second. And therein lies the focus of this article. *Sensitivity*. It's become a universal, automatic, empty reaction. These days it's celebrated with such fervor it carries less meaning than applause from sitcom viewers, triggered by a flashing studio sign.

When I was a kid, sensitivity was merely a tool for compassion. I was encouraged to "be sensitive" toward the feelings of others—as opposed to being encouraged to react with extreme sensitivity over *every fucking thing anyone ever says or does to you*.

Modern-day sensitivity can be defined almost exclusively as the batteries to the bullhorn. It's the component that powers your ability to scream at others, aggressively informing them that your slights, pains, and misfortunes are equal to or of greater value than theirs. And I don't know where or when this first started, but millennials take the brunt of the blame.

The older generation calls them coddled, weak-willed, privileged, and selfish. Sure, that's all true. But it's not the millennials' fault. As much as these parents want to blame the kids, when the fuck do the kids get to start blaming the parents? Toddlers don't instill the fear and mistrust of *every single stranger* in themselves. They don't purchase their



JOKES, SONGS, TWITTER ACCOUNTS, FACEBOOK PROFILES—ANYTHING CONTAINING AN ADVERSE OPINION THESE DAYS—IS NOT TO BE IGNORED OR SHRUGGED OFF, BUT DESTROYED.

own cell phones as a means of being tagged, tracked, and falsely protected from the common dangers of this world. And, most importantly, a child doesn't independently invent the concept that he or she is automatically instrumental to the shape of others and/or any event they encounter.

It's the elders that planted the "Germs of Perfection" (awesome Bad Religion song, by the way) in the heads of these future egomaniacs. The very people meant to teach and prepare them for actual life instead chose to only regale them with fairy tales of an idealistic one. That led to a demographic of permanent victims, unable to process loss, failure, or insult. Jokes, songs, Twitter accounts, Facebook profiles—anything containing an adverse opinion these days—is not to be ignored or shrugged off, but destroyed. And as much as I don't blame millennials for their, at times, abhorrent tendencies, I will lob this criticism at them: **YOU ALL NEED TO TOUGHEN UP.**

The end is coming soon. Trust me on that. If you younger folks don't rid yourselves of such weakness, you're the ones we're gonna eat. It's that simple. You can't walk through the postapocalyptic wasteland saying, "This place is just too harsh, man." You'd better nut the fuck up! That's the only chance you have to survive! Otherwise, you'll be the kid being shoved into a generator-fueled pizza oven. "I don't like being

objectified," says the millennial. Sure. Whatever you say, pal. Can somebody come salt this guy before I slide him in?

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying offensive shit doesn't exist. Recognizing said shit leads to progress. We need the ability to examine our actions and say, "Can you believe we thought that was okay?" Without hindsight, you end up being the dude at the Halloween party wearing blackface and yelling, "What?! It's a joke!"

So, yes, try a little tenderness. But pick your sensitivity battles. Save your energy for the big fight. Again, it's right around the corner. Take a page from the book of New Yorkers—be kind enough to listen to the problems of others but determined enough to let them know when they're getting in the fucking way. And allow your neighbors the same two privileges. It'll come in handy.

Once civilization does finally fall, when you're surrounded by flames, blood, and horror, it'll be nice to be able to say, "I can deal with this," and not, "I wish I'd moved to L.A. when I had the chance." 

*Joe DeRosa is an L.A.-based comedian, writer, director, and actor ("Better Call Saul" and "Louie"). His multiple stand-up specials and albums can be found online, as well as his podcasts *We'll See You in Hell* and *Emotional Hangs*.*



DESERT ROSE

MY hometown is pretty small, the kind where everybody knows everybody. Though I attended a state college in a slightly bigger pond, I still found myself in classes with a number of people I grew up with. One of those people was a woman I'd always desired, but never in a million years thought I'd have a chance to be with.

On campus, she was the girl all the guys went after. Being beautiful, she could take her pick. Cynthia looked like a classic pinup: blonde with long legs, a willowy waist, and perfect tits—the kind that make alluring mounds under a tight sweater.

Cynthia and I sometimes exchanged banter at parties or after classes, but I'd never tried to come on to her because I figured she was way out of my league. I stand just shy of five-eight, I'm average-looking, and I wasn't a jock—generally not the kind of guy most girls fight over.

Fast-forward to the present—roughly 15 years after we both graduated college. I keep in shape, and after college I learned how to dress and groom myself properly. I have a good job in the hospitality industry that requires me to travel.

Last summer I was driving through parts of the Southwest, visiting clients along the way. The piercing desert sun was just starting to set when I pulled off the highway and arrived at a gorgeous resort where I'd be spending the night before a morning meeting with its CEO. The place was not some weird New Age retreat, like so many of those crazy places in the desert—thanks to health nuts and UFO fanatics. It was a luxurious oasis with golf greens, various pools, and great food.

The resort was comping me a room for the night, and I was looking forward to a massage and a swim after the long drive. The dry heat that met me as I got out of my car nearly knocked me on my ass, so after the valet drove off, I was happy to head inside for a drink.

I sat down at the bar to go through emails, my usual routine. Then out of the corner of my eye I saw a woman.

Well, it was more a rush of blonde hair combined with a loud, musical laugh as she disappeared across the lobby. At first I wasn't sure if she was real or if she was some kind of lovely mirage.

My old crush Cynthia had been exactly like that—like so-called heat lightning. There and gone before you fully realized it, but you swore there was a flash behind the clouds, even though there had been no rain. That's how Cynthia had been when she'd caught my attention in high school. And then later, after spotting her for the first time at college, I began to catch glimpses of her regularly and was always blown away by her beauty.

NEVER ONE TO IGNORE THE REQUEST OF A LADY IN BED, I TONGUED AND FINGERED HER SWEET PUSSY UNTIL SHE CAME.

After I got settled in my swank hotel suite, I booked a Swedish massage, figuring I'd order room service and crash afterward.

When I arrived at the first-floor spa, the receptionist handed me a glass of ice water and led me into a plush room where I could undress and get comfortable on the heated massage table. As soon as I was on my back, I started to drift off, being so tired from hours of driving. But just as I was falling asleep, there was a quiet knock on the door and a woman's voice asking if I was ready.

"Yes, come on in," I replied, and she entered.

When I looked up and saw the masseuse's face, recognition bolted me out of my stupor. She appeared to experience a nearly identical moment.

"Tom?" she asked, smiling and tilting her head. "Is that you?"

I smiled back. "Hi, Cynthia."

"Oh my God! This is crazy."

"We're both a long way from home, huh?"

"I'll say. What are you doing out here?"

"Work," I replied, gesturing to the lavish spa room. "As you can see, my job is grueling."

She laughed that sweet, hearty laugh that I remembered hearing at so many parties. I told her about my morning meeting, and joked again about the perks of my profession.

She shook her head, still marveling. "I always liked your sense of humor."

"Flattery will get you everywhere," I teased. "What about you? How on earth did you end up here?"

"How much time do you have?"

"Well, I did book an hour for this massage."

"Yes, but you're supposed to be relaxing—not listening to my life story."

"Right, but I'm still dying to know how you ended up becoming a massage therapist in the middle of the desert."

She smiled, her green eyes sparkling with a hint of mischief. "Maybe I'll tell you later. Now, let's get down to business."

Cynthia proceeded to give me a truly excellent massage that left me floating on air. Afterward, I was practically drunk with relaxation, which is probably how I managed to muster the courage to ask her out.

"Want to grab a drink when you're done working?"

"Sure," Cynthia said. "I have one more client, and then...shall I come up to your room?"

My stomach leapt into my throat. "Perfect," I answered.

A few hours later, we were both sitting on the balcony of my suite, drinking a bottle of chilled champagne. She wore a linen slip dress that showed off her toned arms and lithe figure. We'd just finished reminiscing about college and our mutual acquaintances when she put her hand on my arm and said, "I want to know something."

"What?" I asked.

"How come you never asked me out? I've always wondered."

"Jesus," I responded. There was no escaping this one. I decided to be candid. "I thought you were too gorgeous to be

interested in a guy like me. I mean...even now, look at you."

She laughed and shook her head. "You always kept your distance," she chastised. "But now I'm sitting only inches away from you, in case you're inclined to finally do something."

Feeling brave, I grabbed her hand off my arm and pulled her toward me. "I'm inclined."

We kissed for a good while, until she pulled away from me, stepped inside the sliding glass door, and took off her slip dress. Following her lead, I began to unbutton my shirt. She grabbed my hand and led me inside toward the king-size bed, and we left a trail of clothes in our wake.

I sat her down on the bed and kissed my way across her elegant collarbone, letting my hands roam all over her perfect body. But suddenly she pushed me back onto the mattress. While I relaxed, she climbed on top of me and rubbed her breasts against my face, letting me enjoy the sensation of being surrounded by those fleshy mounds. I cupped her tits with both hands, letting my palms caress her hard nipples.

But then Cynthia sat up, straddling me and smiling. I let go of her breasts and just lay there, admiring their absolute perfection. I must've looked completely awestruck because she started laughing.

"Are those real?" I asked jokingly.

"Yep," she said. "Same tits you pretended not to want in college."

"Goddamn," I muttered. I reached around to give one of her ass cheeks a squeeze. "You're so fucking gorgeous."

"Took you long enough to do something about it."

I sat up and began sucking on those peach-colored nipples. "Forgive me," I muttered into her flesh.

I switched places with Cynthia, flipping her onto her back. I kissed my way down her beautiful body, peeling off her last item of clothing—a lacy pink thong. Her pussy was mostly shaved but adorned with just a little triangle of dark blonde pubic hair. I kissed the insides of her thighs before spreading her folds with my fingers.

"I want to taste you," I told her.

"Then do it," she command-whispered.

Cynthia spread her legs wider and I dove in, my tongue going straight to her clit. She sighed with pleasure. "Don't stop."

Never one to ignore the request of a lady in bed, I tongued and fingered her sweet pussy until she came, letting out a sustained moan.

Afterward, she pulled me up, wrapped her arms around me, and we shared a long, hot kiss.

"Does that qualify as a happy ending?" I asked her.

AS I HELPED POSITION HER TIGHT, WET PUSSY ONTO MY COCK, I WATCHED AS SHE STARTED TO RUB HER CLIT.

She smiled. "Something like that."

Then Cynthia put her hand around my hard cock. Her expression turned mischievous.

"Now what should we do about you? I was so tempted to suck you off earlier in the spa. But that wouldn't have been very professional."

"Making up for lost time is a theme here tonight," I told her.

"You're right," Cynthia said as she trailed her tongue down my stomach. She sank far enough down to take my dick into her mouth, paying special attention to the head.

I closed my eyes. This felt like a dream, and for all I knew I really was dreaming. Of all the people I could have ended up in bed with, I never saw this one coming.

Cynthia stroked my balls and sucked my cock, her head bobbing up and down. As much as I didn't want this blowjob to end, I wanted to fuck her more than anything in the world, so I guided her back on top of me.

As I helped her position her tight, wet pussy onto my cock, I watched as she started to rub her clit. I grabbed hold of her tits and she began to ride me like a wild woman.

We went at it like that for a while, until I decided to turn her around and fuck her from behind. Cynthia came again, her clenching pussy squeezing my cock. We ended the night with me on top, fucking her with hard, deep strokes, her arms and legs wrapped tightly around my torso. Minutes later I slipped over the orgasmic edge and blew my load inside her.

We drifted off to sleep afterward, but by the time I woke up, she'd already left. No note, just a lipstick print on the pad of paper next to the phone.

Still exhausted but incredibly happy, I showered, dressed, and headed to the





resort restaurant for my meeting.

The hostess showed me to a private table overlooking a succulent garden where the CEO was waiting. He greeted me with a handshake and said, "I hope my staff made you comfortable last night."

"Yes," I said. "The service was outstanding."

—Tom W., Omaha, Nebraska

DREAM LOVER

THE window of lesbian opportunity had closed for me, or so I feared. That probably sounds stupid. I was a sexy chick in my twenties. If I had wanted some pussy, I should have been able to get some.

But somehow it had never worked out that way. I'd had a straitlaced upbringing, then went wild in college, which was lots of fun, of course. But I'd only fucked guys,

who were always hovering around me with their tongues hanging out. I was a hot young thing, so getting a man into bed was never much of a challenge.

Not so much with college women, though. At least not for me.

Admittedly, I didn't try very hard. Maybe I was too shy. Maybe I just didn't have the basic social vocabulary to properly flirt with my own team. Whenever I tried, I came across as awkward and bumbling. I don't think those other women even knew I was hoping to seduce them.

But after graduating, my sapphic desires didn't go away. I still longed to kiss another woman on the lips and tangle my tongue with hers. I still wanted to lay my hands on a pair of full, ripe breasts, to slip my fingers deep inside a pussy not my own, to put my face between two slender thighs and lick some sweet honeypot until my lover moaned in orgasm.

I'd been out in the real world for half a decade, dating a guy I'd met a few months earlier, but my fantasies of wild sex with a woman still gnawed at me. Not that there was anything wrong with the life I had. I had a good job, a nice place to live, great friends, and a guy I really liked.

My boyfriend, Brendan, was tall and fit, with a finely molded face and a poet's sensitive soul. He was also lots of fun in bed, fulfilling my every need—or at least all the needs that a man can satisfy. But my secret craving for pussy lived on.

I had resigned myself to the notion that I'd missed my chance to explore this part of my sexuality. I should have channeled some of that boldness I'd exhibited with campus men toward the women I'd fantasized about. But hindsight is 20/20.

Brendan and I didn't live together. He had a female roommate, Tamara. She was quiet, studious, and away at her job a lot

**SHE PRESSED HER
BODY AGAINST ME,
HER CROTCH GRINDLY
HOTLY AGAINST
MY THIGH.**

of the time. She was also pretty damn gorgeous. I wasn't worried about her and Brendan fooling around, though. They got along just fine, but there was absolutely no sexual spark between them.

I, on the other hand, found myself seriously lusting after her.

Over time, Tamara began to invade my dreams, and sometimes I awoke with a wet pussy and lingering images of her writhing against my naked body. When I was over at Brendan's apartment, I always hoped for a glimpse of her. I'd had plenty of useless girl crushes in college, but this one was different.

Meanwhile, my relationship with Brendan was great. I loved his cock, and I also enjoyed his company. He was warm, witty, and considerate.

One night, Brendan and I were snuggled up in his room watching a movie. I heard Tamara come in, and like clockwork I got distracted by dirty thoughts of her. I stopped focusing on the film—that is until two of the female characters began to get it on.

I started squirming beside Brendan, so much so that he noticed. My heart pounded as I watched the women kiss.

Suddenly I noticed Brendan looking at me. "Does that bother you for some reason?" His tone was teasing, but what he said caught me off guard.

For a moment, I almost burst out laughing. But then tears sprang to my eyes, and before I could stop myself, I confessed the whole ridiculous mess to Brendan. I told him about my long-simmering desires—but omitted the part about Tamara.

Brendan took it all in and was perfectly understanding, which I'll admit surprised me a little. He even seemed to sympathize with my quiet despair over never having gotten a single taste of girl-on-girl fun





when I was in college.

But he surprised me even more when he said matter-of-factly, “Why don’t you go to bed with Tamara?”

“What?!” I practically yelped. It was like he’d been reading my mind. I felt exposed.

He shrugged. “She’s bi, and she’s kinda hot for you. Trust me, she never misses a chance to tell me she’d do you in a heartbeat.”

Then Brendan smiled and got up, grabbing his jacket. “You know what? I’m gonna go out for a couple of hours. Go knock on Tamara’s door and see what happens. Though I have a pretty good idea about how it’ll go.” He bent down to kiss me and walked out of the apartment.

I just sat there, stunned. Then I realized I had the best boyfriend in the world.

Still, it took balls (so to speak) to do what he advised. So I went to the liquor cabinet in the kitchen and found the bourbon. After a generous shot of liquid courage, I walked down the hall to Tamara’s door. Music was playing in her bedroom. I knocked.

Tamara opened the door and stared at me blankly. Then her face registered confusion, followed by amused interest.

I found myself utterly unable to engage in small talk. A lifetime of sexual curiosity burned inside me. Tamara—standing there in pajama bottoms and an oversized T-shirt—looked insanely desirable.

After a couple seconds, I just blurted out, “Please fuck me.”

A radiant grin lit up Tamara’s pretty face. She grabbed onto my upper arm and pulled me through her bedroom door. Suddenly, our mouths were pressed together.

For the first time in my life, I was really kissing another woman—a deep, shameless, tongue-tangling kiss. It felt fantastic, and my body practically quivered with excitement.

She drew me farther into her bedroom and kicked the door shut behind us, even though we had the apartment to ourselves. (Thanks, Brendan!) Then she pressed her body against me, her firm breasts rubbing against mine, her crotch grinding hotly against my thigh.

Tamara tugged at my clothes, wanting me naked. I helped her strip at the same time. I was savoring every second of this unexpected deliciousness, like when her fantastic tits came into view, or when she dropped her pajama pants and bared her shaved pussy.

I PRESSED MY CUNT ONTO HER MOUTH WHILE HER OWN CLIT SEEMED TO THROB AGAINST MY TONGUE.

Things happened so fast, but with my senses so alive, I registered each development. Dizzy with desire, I found myself lost in a glorious blur of female curves.

The two of us fell onto the bed. The sensation of her bare skin on mine was absolute heaven. My brain was electric with lust. Tamara and I kissed passionately as I pulled her body tight, feeling no inhibitions at all.

We writhed together on her bed, grinding against each other. A thousand and one fantasies exploded in my head as my hands roamed her beautiful contours. I caressed her satiny skin, reaching down to clutch a handful of her tight ass. My other hand explored her tits, thrilled by their shape and firmness. Even more exciting was when she sighed with pleasure, confirming that I was doing something right.

Tamara reached down to caress my pussy, and I reached for hers at the same time. Our fingers traced each other's swollen lips. We alternately moaned and gasped, our shared pleasure mounting. I gazed into Tamara's half-closed eyes, my own cheeks burning, a craving for every inch of her rippling through my body.

We slipped our fingers inside each other. My body's response was immediate—a bolt of excitement that made my pussy even wetter. Tamara worked her fingers deeper into me as I did the same to her, treasuring the feel of her slick cunt.

I loved the smell of her—her hair, her skin, the faint musk of her pussy. This last scent was so different from when I was with Brendan, or with any other man. It was a fragrance of intense, aroused femininity, and it drove me wild.

Tamara's knowing fingers rubbed my clit. My ecstasy swelled, surged. I teased her own bud, again thrilled to feel her respond to my touch, and to hear her moan. Her fingers worked in and out of me, and following her lead, I finger-fucked her with a similar rhythm.

Seconds later, we both began bucking crazily, and then smothered a mutual cry of bliss by mashing our mouths together. I came hard, lifting into a head-spinning orgasm, and Tamara was right there with me, quivering through a delirious climax of her own.

When our bodies stopped shaking, we grinned at each other, panting. But the two of us getting off once didn't mean the show was over. I wanted more, and so did she. I wanted to taste her pussy. I wanted to make her come again.

We moved our bodies into a 69 position, with Tamara guiding me to be on top, my pussy and ass covering her face, my own face lowering to her pussy. Even as her tongue touched me, I pressed my mouth onto her hot cleft and began greedily licking.

I parted her folds with my face, feeling her wetness on my cheeks. Then I put my tongue to her clit, determined to make Tamara come with my mouth.

She hungrily ate my pussy from below, her fingers clutching my ass. I pressed my cunt onto her mouth while her own clit seemed to throb against my tongue.

Before long, Tamara was thrashing, her hips bucking. Moaning, she came again, and a moment later my debut lesbian experience reached another ecstatic peak and I practically screamed, my whole body shaking.

It had been worth the wait. And weirdly enough, I had my boyfriend Brendan to thank for setting things in motion!

—Molly C., Ashland, Oregon

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